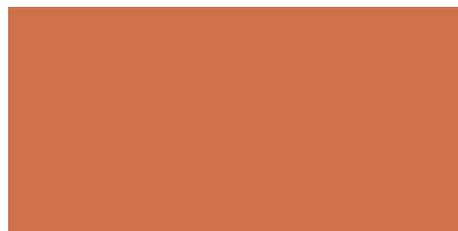


MANAGING DIGITAL ASSETS IN CREATIVE WORKFLOWS

Would A DAM Make A Difference?



How To Centralize And Share Media Assets Effectively

Understanding The Downfall Of Most Creative Workflows.

Those of us working in creative fields often feel incredibly lucky. We get to learn new skills and pursue new ideas and trends. We get to partner with unique brands and talented coworkers. We get to be creative every day.

Unfortunately, there is another side to this coin.

The art of creative collaboration relies on a seemingly endless array of digital assets like stock photography, marketing collateral, brand elements, and fonts. Additionally, refining deliverables together often means that they are multiple versions of all of these assets lying around in various stages.

This can lead to a significant amount of time spent on what is essentially busywork – searching for the right digital assets, confirming accuracy and approval of said assets, and getting everything in place. Creatives can spend just as much time juggling assets in this process as they spend doing the work they actually love and look forward to every day.

We refer to this dilemma as Creative Chaos.

Creative chaos can dampen morale, exhaust productivity, burn through working hours, stress out your whole team, lead to the wrong assets being used in projects and ultimately have a negative impact on your relationships with clients.

The good news is that this chaos can be conquered. Some teams control the chaos by setting strict, complex processes around assets. Others designate certain team members to spend a majority of their time managing this chaos for their whole team. Others choose to use a digital asset management (DAM) system to control the chaos once and for all.

We've put together some questions to ask yourself about your current workflow, collaboration practices, and more. These questions are intended to help you identify exactly what concerns and priorities your unique business should take into account when choosing a DAM.



Ten Questions To Ask Yourself

01 Where Are Your team's digital assets located?

In a perfect world, all of your assets would be organized in a single, central, easily accessible location. That's because ideally, everyone should be able to get the assets they need without loading up a thumb drive, diving into the depths of email attachments, or bugging a coworker to resend them. It may not sound like a big deal, but not being able to find what you quickly and easily isn't just a waste of time — it can be a source of real frustration and totally throw off your focus. One caveat is that there be assets that you don't want to be accessible to your whole team. Maybe they are confidential or outdated. Still, when those assets are needed, it's preferable to have them in that central repository. Otherwise, this same frustration and confusion can occur when people need to find these documents for whatever reason. Instead of keeping these assets outside of your centralized source, consider using permissions and filters to ensure that they are only searchable for those individuals who require access.

02 How many of your coworkers work directly with creative assets?

Chances are that a smaller group - three or less people - will work together so closely that communication can do a lot of the heavy lifting. But as group size grows, the need for constant communication can become an impediment and slow down actual workflows. It's also a reflection of how smaller teams are focused. A smaller team is more likely to tackle only one or two projects at a time. With greater team size comes greater specialization, and more steps are added to processes.

Once a team's size enters double digits or there are multiple teams, lack of a proper filing system can lead to diminished productivity and wasted time. Like so many of the workflow tools we use, a DAM can potentially empower people to get their actual work done, instead of relying on others or spending valuable time doing busywork.

03 How many people in your organization would be able to find a particular asset at any given time?

It's true that universal accessibility isn't necessary for effective digital asset management. However, accessibility isn't just about everyday workflows. Accessibility is crucial for unexpected situations. Let's say that a valued team member is on vacation, or is sick, or leaves your organization. If that person is the gatekeeper for certain assets, your business is in trouble. By making your assets easier to find, you can safeguard against this issue. And if that wonderful team member isn't spending hours of their time helping everyone else track down assets all the time, they will be happier, too.

04 Is there a process for tagging assets with a shared vocabulary or naming convention?

A standard process for tagging assets is essential. Otherwise, the best intentions of all your employees and teammates can lead to disorganized chaos.

People can become defensive about organizing systems. It's not uncommon for someone to shirk naming conventions because they believe they have a "better" way. Remind them that you're not saying their approach is right or wrong, but rather that a single shared process ensures consistency and accessibility. A more common issue is that people recognize the importance of the system and agree with it, but fail to maintain it. This is the result of multi-tasking, forgetfulness, and all other sorts of very human flaws. It can be inevitable in a manual tagging system. One way to improve tag consistency is by choosing a DAM with auto-tagging. Auto-tagging uses artificial intelligence to recognize certain attributes in assets and automatically tag them. While it may not pull every piece of information, it still lays a solid foundation for discoverability. Any other tags you want to add are for your own structural purposes, and will require minimal effort.

05 How much extra time do your teammates have in their work days?

One of the most significant benefits of a digital asset management system is time saved. Of course, that outcome depends entirely on how often your team is accessing digital assets, how many you hold on to, your volume of projects and clients, and many other factors. If you only have a dozen or so brand assets, chances are that a digital asset management tool won't really help you save time because your team can handle a dozen assets on their own. It's when we see organization with hundreds, thousands, and hundreds of thousands of digital assets that we see people spending considerable amounts of time dealing with the assets. That's when a DAM can cut down on busywork and start saving people serious time. We've also seen instances of smaller, fast-moving businesses such as creative agencies who are accustomed to working long hours. It's not uncommon for agency employees to have surrendered to the creative chaos. They have come to accept that work will be slower because of the hours spent uploading, tagging, searching, and sending assets. Late nights in front of the computer become the norm, and those extra hours aren't even solely dedicated to creative work. Over time, burnout can become a serious problem in fast-paced environments like this. By giving your employees some of their time back, you're setting them up for success — less busywork, better ability to focus, and better work life balance.

06 Does your company work with freelancers, consultants, or clients?

If you frequently interact with clients, you know the importance of delivering well-executed work on time. But how your present that work can leave a lasting impression. Certain DAM solutions will empower to send directly to clients, or even create a custom, branded portal for them to interact with.

An effective DAM tool can also help integrate consultants and freelancers into your workflow. Ensure that everyone has access to everything they need right away. If these contract workers are partially or fully remote, make sure to choose a DAM that is easily accessible, like a cloud-based solution.

07 Are any of your teammates remote or frequently traveling?

If your team is centrally located in a shared space, traditional server-based DAM solutions can easily meet your needs. Issues can arise when some teammates are remote, although certain server-based DAMs will be able to accommodate people working from home.

A cloud-based DAM can ensure remote accessibility of your digital assets. This can mitigate remote set-up issues, but it can also benefit employees who are frequently traveling and networking. A cloud-based solution will allow these team members to upload and access digital assets, whether they're waiting in an airport or at a corporate event.

08 Have there been instances of unapproved or incorrect files being used by internal teams or partners?

Mistakes can happen even in the most organized environments, but using a DAM can help clear up confusion and improve consistency. However, it's important to ask yourself if there are other issues that need to be addressed. Sometimes, in the absence of a DAM, incorrect assets are selected because it's unclear if they are the most recent or approved versions. But it's also possible that incorrect assets are being used because a client hasn't specified exactly what they want, or status is unclear. If mistakes are happening because of issues like these, it's worth revisiting your approach to workflow. This may require more communication with clients or adjusting expectations internally, but the extra time is worth it. By getting on the right path now, you're saving time and avoiding mistakes in the long run — with or without a DAM.

09 Which tools are already part of your workflow?

You want your new DAM to play nice with the tools you use every day. While you may not be able to find an integration for every single solution, here are a few to keep in mind:

- + Creative tools. Designers typically work with Adobe Creative Cloud, Sketch, and other creative applications. Identify which ones your creative team uses most often and seek out a DAM that will support them.
- + Delivery and sharing tools. While your DAM is likely to become your primary tool for accessing and sharing digital assets, you may have clients or freelancers who deliver assets to you via DropBox, Google Drive, and similar platforms. If this is the case, opt for a DAM solution that integrates with these tools so that you can upload these assets to your collection quickly and effortlessly.

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Small Teams Can Benefit From DAM, Too



Teams and organizations of all sizes can benefit from DAM, but between high pricing and intense IT requirements, actually getting started with one can feel like a herculean effort for a smaller, busy team.

Extensis Connect is different. It doesn't require a major financial or administrative commitment. This accessible, cloud-based DAM tool empowers digital asset management as you take on more projects and team members, surpass your goals, and grow your business.

Here's How Extensis Connect Works

- + Add teammates and set permissions
- + Upload assets from any device
- + Save time with automatic smart-tagging
- + Search and find whatever you need, almost instantly
- + Convert assets to different file types as needed
- + Get creative and work with assets, then add them back
- + Send to teammates, clients, or whoever else needs them

If it sounds simple, that's because it is. This intuitive tool can be leveraged to cut down busywork, reduce frustration, improve efficacy, and provide peace of mind. Give your team the tool they need to focus on creating their best work, at any time and from any place.

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