



Complete Guide to Digital Asset Management

Managing Your Digital Images with Ease and Efficiency

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Introduction

In today's tech-charged world, Architecture, Engineering, Construction (AEC) and Real Estate firms rely on high-quality images to showcase their work in bids and proposals to win new business.

And there's no shortage of digital assets at their disposal. [Research](#) shows that 52% of AEC firms surveyed have more than 20 thousand images in their libraries and most believe it will continue to grow.

The proliferation of digital assets can be tough to manage. Content is often stored in multiple locations, libraries are littered with outdated and duplicate images, and it's hard for users to find and access the content they need, when they need it.

Fortunately, there are solutions like Digital Asset Management (DAM) tools that can help you manage the image overload, work more efficiently and create more impactful proposals.

What exactly is Digital Asset Management, and how can it help grow your business?

In this guide, you'll learn about what types of DAM solutions are available, how they work, the challenges they solve and the benefits they provide. We'll also provide tips on choosing a DAM solution that's right for you and help determine your return on investment.



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What Is Digital Asset Management (DAM)?

Digital Asset Management is a way to manage your organization's digital assets efficiently and in one place. However, it's more than just a storage solution. You'll be able to find, use and share assets seamlessly, saving you time and money.

DAM empowers you to manage digital assets throughout their extensive lifecycle; you'll be able to create, manage, distribute, and then either preserve or archive images.

Most DAM solutions are cloud-based, so you can access your assets from anywhere, at any time. And it puts you in control by ensuring that users only have access to approved content.





The Challenges DAM Solves and the Benefits It Provides

It's easy to underestimate how much time is spent managing and working with digital content. Without the right tools, finding, resizing and using images takes up a tremendous amount of time.

DAM solves time and cost challenges, creating process efficiencies and boosting productivity. In fact, our research shows that nearly half of AEC firms currently leverage a DAM solution to manage their ever-growing collection of digital assets, and it's paying off for them big time:

Forty-six percent said they saw improved marketing productivity. They were spending less time on production tasks so they could spend more time on higher value, critical tasks that impact overall business.

And 47% said they experienced improved operational efficiencies. They find it easier and faster to access images, appreciate that quality images are available firm-wide, and state that deliverables can be created more efficiently including RFPs.



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DAM also enable users to:



Ninety percent of firms surveyed said having one central location for all their digital files was among the **top benefits of DAM.**

► Easily access images with powerful search capabilities

With DAM, assets are tagged with specific project data, making them quick and easy to find. When more people within your organization can easily find, access and leverage authorized assets, teams can work more quickly and win more business.

► Maintain and collaborate from one central location

Ninety percent of firms surveyed said having one central location for all their digital files was among the top benefits of DAM. It gives you a well-organized visual library and ensures files are securely maintained while also facilitating collaboration between internal and external teams.

► Create efficiencies for your marketing team

Increased marketing productivity is a main advantage of implementing a DAM solution. It reduces time spent on tedious tasks like finding and managing images while improving productivity for document creation and other creative assets. Some DAM solutions integrate with tools like PowerPoint and InDesign to enable seamless creation with existing templates, allowing automatic image resizing and drag and drop functionality.



► **Get more bang for your buck on each asset**

Photography, videos and other digital assets cost companies a significant amount of money and time to create. But our research on AEC firms shows that many of those digital assets go unused. Why? Oftentimes, digital assets are locally stored and aren't shared, or file sharing services are mismanaged. In larger companies, employees may not know certain files exist at all. A DAM solution empowers you to get the most value from your assets with keyword tagging, so they can be easily found and repurposed.

► **Build and strengthen your brand**

According to research reported in an [Inc. magazine](#) article, consistent brands are worth 23% more than those who are not. Streamlining your content creation helps create brand consistency by ensuring that your brand's integrity is maintained. You can even track copyright and approvals to ensure it.

How DAM Benefits Different Users

There are many people within an organization who need to find, use and share images and other digital assets.

Let's look at a few key roles that can benefit from DAM and explore how the technology eases their daily struggles, helping them be more productive and effective:



► Marketing Managers and Coordinators

Marketers lead or assist creating bids, proposals, and presentations and are the gatekeepers of the brand and its assets. Finding and sharing what they need—the right image or the most current PowerPoint template—when they need it is often a daily struggle, especially while managing tight deadlines.

A DAM solution, especially one organized by project, provides one location so marketers can easily find the images and information they need. It saves time and increases efficiency by organizing digital assets with structure and common terminology, enabling marketers to find and reuse previously created documents and generate new materials from templates with little or no editing. Project-based DAM solutions also integrate with the technology marketers use every day, like InDesign, further smoothing workflows.

DAM also eliminates the need for a marketing team to be the middleman. With DAM, everyone in the company with authorized access can find the images and assets they need.

In short, DAM makes it easier to find images and gives marketers more time to focus on creative tasks. And by ensuring brand consistency, DAM gives marketing professionals a break from playing brand cop.

► Business Development Managers and Partners

To win new projects, business development collaborates across teams to pull together the right information for proposals.

Like marketers, business development often fields last minute requests, forcing them to operate under tight deadlines. They also have the added pressure of meeting their KPIs by bringing in customers to boost the business's bottom line.

How does DAM help cut to the chase and make their work easier? They can find what they need for a powerful pitch in one place, access it anytime and have confidence that material is approved for sharing. This means they have more time to focus on fine-tuning their presentation to impress clients and prospects.



► **President/CEO**

To grow a business and ensure a steady stream of revenue, creating high-quality proposals efficiently is critical. That's a lot easier when everyone has access to high-quality images that help promote the company's work.

DAM provides instant visualization of previous projects, at any time, so employees can quickly and easily access what they need. And they can easily reference them during customer and prospect conversations to communicate the company's vision and bring it to life.

DAM solutions can integrate seamlessly with existing technology, like ERP, CRM, and other enterprise solutions, helping to create efficient workflows and better communication between teams.

► **Information Technology (IT)**

Technology teams, responsible for the company IT infrastructure and tech stack, keep systems running and ensure correct server and access management. However, this is an extremely difficult task when images are clogging up servers and marketing is constantly asking them to fix broken links.

DAM frees up internal servers by storing images in the cloud, increasing security and speed. It also reduces the number of times IT has to fix broken links or provide access to different servers, ensuring employees have access to the content they need, whenever and wherever they need it (even from remote offices or home).

Types of DAM Solutions

If you're thinking DAM makes sense for your organization, know that there are two types of DAM solutions to consider: Project-based and brand-based. When evaluating, it's important to consider the way your organization works.

Think of the choice like this:



Project-based DAM solutions

are built to store, organize, and connect digital assets to specific projects and/or properties, for instance, The Rockefeller Building or The Jones' Renovation. They work well for construction, architecture and real estate firms that may have different search or organization methods than other industries.



Brand-based DAM solutions

cater to CPG, retail, and eCommerce verticals and are product, advertising, and consumer-facing. They organize and centralize digital assets around brands or products using custom tags and batch keywords.

When choosing between a project-based or brand-based DAM solution, here are some of the differences you should consider and how they can affect your DAM experience:

► Integration

Integration with other technologies varies by DAM type. For example, many project-based DAM solutions integrate with ERP and CRM solutions, delivering important project and customer information to visual assets and files. Brand-based solutions, on the other hand, focus more on integration with consumer-facing technologies, often connecting with Content Management platforms.

Connecting your DAM solution to the tools you use most can often streamline your workflow and can make DAM the visual hub of your tech stack.

► Image Search and Management

The way a business organizes and searches for assets depends on how employees view and access their work. For example, project-based architecture or engineering firms may find it intuitive to search and tag assets by location, project manager or reference number.

Since project-based and brand-based DAM solutions have different organization methods and options for search, it's important to be aware of how your firm handles these tasks.

► Sales and Marketing Material Development

Product-based companies and project-based firms take different approaches when it comes to marketing and promoting their offerings and engaging with their customers. As a result, the way they use their DAM solutions, and the assets within them, is different too.

For example, in a brand-based company, the head office may be rolling out a new brand identity or releasing new packaging guidelines for a specific product. This needs to be shared and distributed to the global supply chain of creatives, project managers and manufacturers to ensure consistency across the brand. Brand organizations put a premium on control and distribution to complex supply chains. And this is what brand-based DAM solutions do best: they enhance and support these workflows by tracking edits, proofs, and control of products.

In project-based companies, digital assets (i.e. project images and videos) are often used to create proposals in response to RFPs or marketing materials for professional services including brochures, presentations and corporate marketing collateral. Features in project-based DAM solutions enhance the inherent workflows involved in putting together these materials.

How to Select a DAM Partner

Once you've determined that your organization can benefit from better Digital Asset Management and you know which type of solution you need, it's time to decide which DAM provider is right for you. There are three main areas you should consider: DAM technology and functionality, industry and company fit, and value.

Here's **5**
simple steps to
help you evaluate
your options.

1. Look at your digital assets and how they're used

First thing's first, evaluate the size of your asset library and how quickly it's growing.

Consider how many assets you have, what types of files you need to manage and where they are stored.

Next, consider who has access to this content. Is it multiple users in multiple locations? Do they need mobile access? You need to understand how your business is using digital assets, as this will be part of your DAM selection criteria.

Start by talking to the teams that depend on digital assets to understand their pain points. Ask them these questions to pinpoint their needs:

- ▶ How many of these images do you have?
- ▶ What types of files are these? (.jpg, TIFF, PDF, etc.)
- ▶ Where are these images stored?
- ▶ Who has access to them?
- ▶ What are your top concerns?



2. Consider your technology and functionality requirements

When choosing a Digital Asset Management solution, consider what features you require from the system to meet the business needs you identified. Do you need project-based tagging, multiple image search options and controls for who can and can't access images?

Consider whether you need a cloud-based DAM solution or are OK with one that is on-premise. Cloud-based Digital Asset Management systems are becoming an industry standard due to their ease of integration, global access and worry-free backup, but some firms prefer an on-premise solution due to having poor Internet service or need for a LAN.

Speaking of integration, ensure that any solution you are considering will be able to work with your existing systems, such as a CMS and any project databases.

3. Evaluate industry and company fit

You're not only choosing a technology solution; you're choosing a business partner.

It's important that your DAM provider understands your business, your industry and has a solution that accommodates it. If your vendor has a deep understanding of what you do, they'll be more likely to provide reliable advice and best practices for a successful implementation and ongoing support.

Ask your vendor to supply references that match your company's industry and size. And be sure to ask what support they offer after the onboarding process.



4. Consider upfront and ongoing costs

Beyond the obvious software costs, there are other costs to consider when implementing a DAM solution. In fact, with some DAM vendors, it's likely that you will spend more on services, such as software licenses, installation and configuration, data migration, product training, and ongoing support than you do on the software itself. Be sure to evaluate your own needs and ask your vendor to clarify their fees for support, training and customizations.

Take all these costs into account and balance them against the Return on Investment (ROI), which we'll delve into in the next section.

5. Create and distribute a Request for Proposal (RFP)

Once you've done your homework and you have a list of criteria that your DAM solution needs to meet, it's time to create and send an RFP.

In your RFP, detail your pain points and how you see a DAM solution solving them. Share real-world examples to bring the problems and anticipated solutions to life and set your expectations. You also need to include a list of the features and functionality you'll need to solve your pain points.

Now, create a distribution plan to ensure the RFP ends up in the right hands. Make sure you scan the market for vendors that could match your requirements, focusing on those with specific industry experience. Be wary not to cast your net too wide though, as it could make for a more complicated review process.



How to Calculate Your DAM Return on Investment

While you're the one who has done the legwork, pinpointed the ideal DAM system, and have your RFP ready to go, you might not be the one who holds the purse strings.

If you need to get budget sign-off or apply for budget, you're going to need a strong argument for ROI.

Building a Business Case

Although ROI isn't exclusively about money and tangible benefits, you need to demonstrate them in a compelling business case to get the buy-in you need.

To make your case, choose your audience and champion your cause by explaining how a DAM solution will give your business greater productivity and process efficiencies, ultimately helping your firm win more business.



Here are three ways DAM provides value that you should address:

✓ Reduces costs


DAM enables your assets to be found more efficiently, which saves time and money. Also, a DAM solution ensures assets, like professional photography, aren't lost or redundant.

✓ Builds brand equity

Ensuring your teams have easy access to the best digital assets will result in creating more impactful marketing materials and proposals. Because assets are stored in one location and controlled by your marketing team, only the highest quality, most impactful and approved images will be used.

✓ Helps avoid legal disputes

Leveraging a DAM solution vastly reduces the risk of your digital assets being misused and leading to legal disputes. How? They are tagged with metadata that includes images rights, and you can assign permission access levels to different users.

A woman with dark, curly hair and black-rimmed glasses is smiling while holding a silver tablet. She is wearing a white button-down shirt. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Adding Numbers to Demonstrate ROI

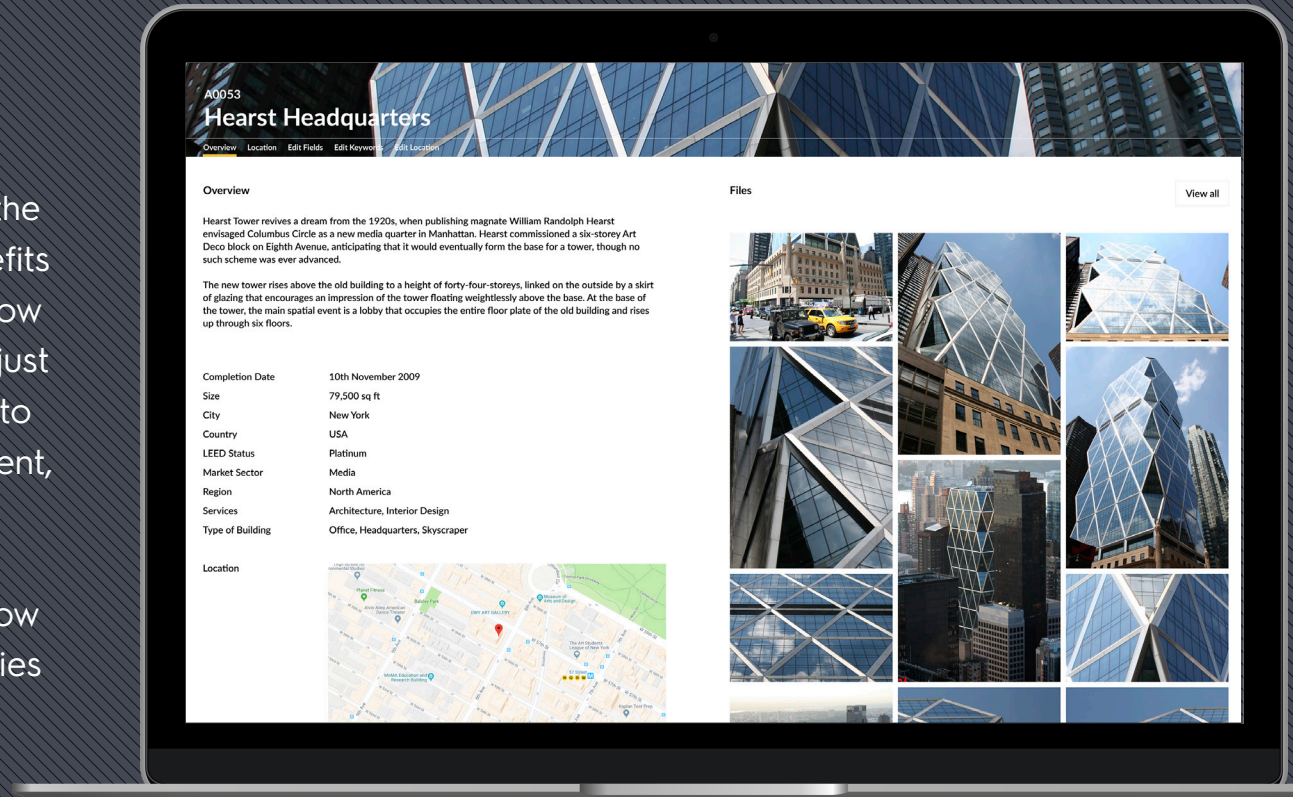
From the cost of producing assets to the time spent looking for them, every variable needs to be considered to prove a DAM solution's value. Calculating all these variables can get tricky, but we've made it easy by creating an [ROI calculator](#) to provide an estimate.

See Your Savings >

What's Next?

Now that you have a handle on your digital asset needs, understand how the right DAM solution can provide benefits across your organization, and you know how to select and make the case for just the right DAM solution, you're ready to take the next step toward more efficient, effective digital asset management.

[Learn more](#) about OpenAsset and how we can help your firm drive efficiencies and cost savings.



About OpenAsset

OpenAsset is the number one project-based Digital Asset Management (DAM) solution for Architecture, Engineering, Construction, and Real Estate firms. It is delivered and supported by Axomic, which has a global presence with staff based in London and New York.

