DAM ESSENTIALS

Your Guide to Digital Asset Management in

CPG

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Table of Contents

Everything you need to know about DAM for CPG

Somehow there's a glut of digital asset management information—and yet, none of it's quite specific enough. **Until now.**

Whether you're a newly hired DAM manager looking for a primer on the CPG space, a marketing manager trying to get your assets onto your ecommerce platform, or a creative director determining whether you need to upgrade your DAM to fit a new use case, this resource is your launching pad to finding the right solutions.

By the end of this guide you should:

- Understand DAM metadata and how it can help support your marketing goals.
- Feel ready to create a high-level plan of action to select, upgrade, or implement your DAM.
- Recognize the key features of a modern DAM and how you can use them to your advantage.
- Know which DAM use cases could work for your CPG company.
- Understand the top integrations you can't live without.

Chapter 1: Data and You

Data Assessment—For Every Stage of Your DAM Journey

It may seem obvious, but managing and maintaining data maturity requires deep knowledge of your data. Regular assessments of your data practices will help you understand how your DAM is being used, how it might function more efficiently, and how you can use it to solve organizational problems.

This assessment is the first step before you begin consolidating data from various systems, applying consistent metadata, changing workflows, or enhancing security. Data audits are also an excellent opportunity to declutter your database regularly.

Your assessment should explore questions like:

- What information is contained in your data? In what format?

- Where is your data stored, both physically and digitally? Is it accessible?

- Which teams are responsible for data storage and management?

- What is the end goal for your data? (Search? Analytics? Consumer experience? AI?)

- What state is your data in? Is it accurate?

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Good metadata is key to a functioning DAM and there's plenty to learn about how to create it (don't worry, we've got a guide for that). To start, here are three things to remember to get the most out of your DAM assessments:

1 - Understand Your Structured and Unstructured Data

Your DAM's data comprises both quantitative and qualitative data—what we call structured and unstructured data. Structured data are those easily identifiable points of information that can be organized into database fields or spreadsheets with relative ease, such as campaign names, geography, and product data.

Unstructured and qualitative data are more challenging to nail down. They often come in the form of images, videos, text files, and even social media communication, which lacks the context that makes them easily searchable. Or unstructured data enters the DAM from uploaded assets without their metadata context, making them impossible to organize, search, or analyze.

Conduct a data audit to understand how you're currently ingesting and managing both data types. You need a robust metadata model and ingestion rules to ensure that unstructured data doesn't overwhelm your DAM and reduce its effectiveness. AI and machine learning tools in modern DAMs can also help to manage the burden of data - but ensure you have a deep understanding of your DAM before trying to solve structural issues with sweeping changes.

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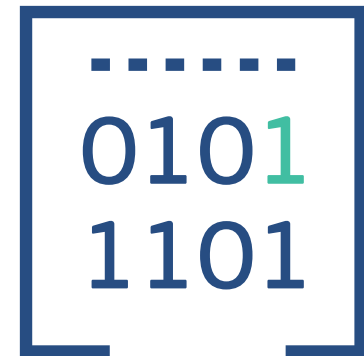
2 - Touch Base With Your Users

Reach out to your users and get a baseline for their experience with your data. Find out how they use your data and content, their pains around discoverability, and how they'd like to use data moving forward. Your goal is not to police them but instead, to harness their collective knowledge to make your data work to their benefit.

3 - Identify Where Data Is Stored and How It Moves

Whether it's in the cloud or an on-premise data repository, it's essential to map out where your data resides, how it's collected and represented, and how it moves across systems. What are your processes for change requests across systems? How do you handle integrations, and which systems host an accurate picture of your data? Your ideal tech stack should include a centralized taxonomy for tagging assets and content to help keep all dependent systems in sync automatically (more on those in the next section).

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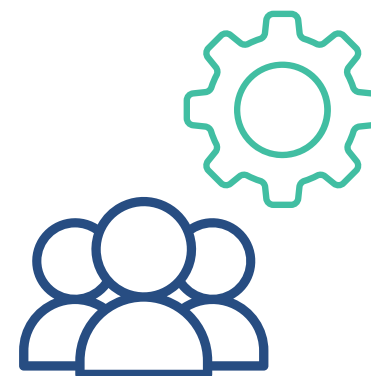
Defining Metadata, Taxonomy, and Keywords

Metadata

Metadata are the descriptive elements used to define and describe an asset. Metadata provides the structure you need to make your content discoverable and accessible in search—good metadata is key to a functioning DAM.

Metadata often falls under three main categories:

Descriptive: Used for discovery and identification purposes, like search. Also includes elements like title, subject, creator, date, location, and keywords.

Structural: Indicates how compound objects are created, like file format, file dimension, file length, size, dimensions, etc.

Administrative: Provides information that helps manage an asset, like rights management metadata or preservation metadata for archiving and preserving an asset.

Data is complex, and the best way to protect your DAM from mismanagement and clutter is to create robust rules for your metadata—otherwise known as taxonomy.

Metadata and You

How does metadata help you manage your CPG assets?

Use your metadata on any asset to search in DAM, update keywords, and collate product information (if you have a PIM integration). Grab all the necessary metadata in your DAM to efficiently distribute to third-party retailers, internal and external partners.

Taxonomy

Your taxonomy organizes your metadata. It is the larger container that classifies the metadata within it, creating connections and relationships between items to solve business problems and user needs.

A well-designed taxonomy helps users intuitively navigate the DAM, search for assets, and efficiently manage meaningful information. Also, taxonomy ensures compliance—a common language and controlled vocabulary for all users, so there is a consistent way to manage your content.

Taxonomy and You

Language, data, assets—the only thing consistent about these things is change. Here are three things to remember to keep your taxonomy in tip-top shape:

Truncate or deprecate: Keep your taxonomy updated with bi-annual health checks. Analyze common terms in your structure and remove outdated language. Keep your taxonomy as light as possible—no more than three levels of hierarchy.

Don't leave it unattended: If you're not careful, new terms added to the taxonomy can be added with no relationship to the overall structure. Keep your hierarchies clear and place any new terms in relevant categories. Create new classifications, if you must, but avoid making miscellaneous categories where new terms are placed but soon forgotten.

Thoughtfully outsource: Third-party services take considerable oversight, so remember to add metadata when using them to check quality. AI (and even human DAM managers) may need to recognize your terms. Geography, culture, language, and colloquialisms may affect your chosen terms and synonyms. Always double-check, seek out DEI support, and update accordingly.

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Keywords

Keywords are a form of metadata and capture deeper aesthetic elements, conveying additional layers of information that help users connect on an emotional level.

Keywords do two things: help you categorize content, and make searching for content easier. They convey intangible qualities about assets—like emotions and concepts—integral to visual storytelling.

So, CPG brands producing product campaigns based upon complex concepts benefit from a keywording methodology that goes beyond what's visible and explores what's invisible.
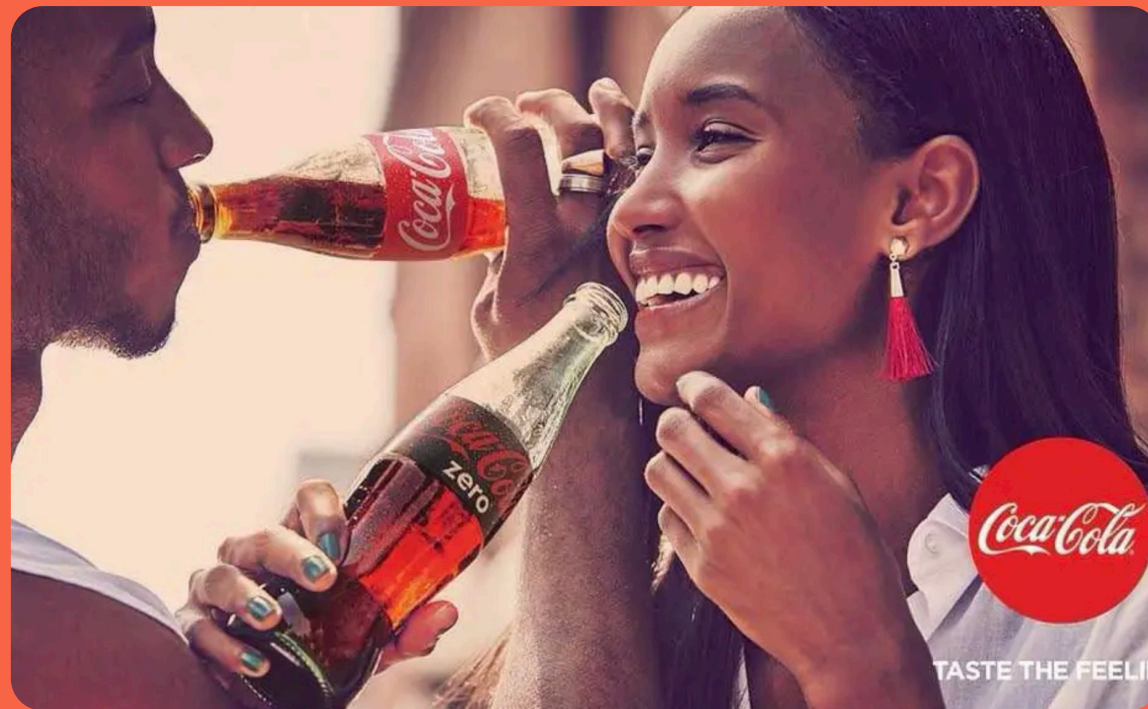
Keywords and You

Consider the potential keywords behind the ad campaign „Taste the Feeling" by Coca-Cola. The slogan encapsulates more than just words themselves. This campaign evokes concepts like memories, happiness, friendship and romance. All these keywords could be used to describe a visual campaign and help improve searchability in the DAM.

Chapter 2: 5 Steps to Selecting the Right DAM

Selecting the exemplary DAM for your company's needs is no small feat. Whether it's the first time you're investing in this foundational tool, or you're in the market for an upgrade, follow these five steps for a smooth journey.

1 - Assemble Your DAM Committee

We call them your DAM dream team, after the greatest sports team ever assembled. Whatever you call them, one thing's for sure; you can't do this alone. To begin your DAM journey—and see it through successfully—you'll need support from folks like:

The business sponsor: The high-level executive who recognizes the gap that digital asset management could fill and advocates for the journey throughout.

The business analyst: The collector of the current problems and forecasted solutions.

The specialist: The external mentor, educator, and industry specialist every DAM team needs at different stages of their journey.

The DAM manager and coordinator(s): The full-time, permanent roles dedicated to daily tasks and strategic functions of the DAM.

The change manager: The one who understands how to best implement new processes so there's minimal disruption to the business.

The IT architect: The embedded IT support with a deep knowledge of your tech stack, how data currently flows, and the wider IT goals the DAM should adhere to.

The DAM Dream Team

★★★

8 Cards Included
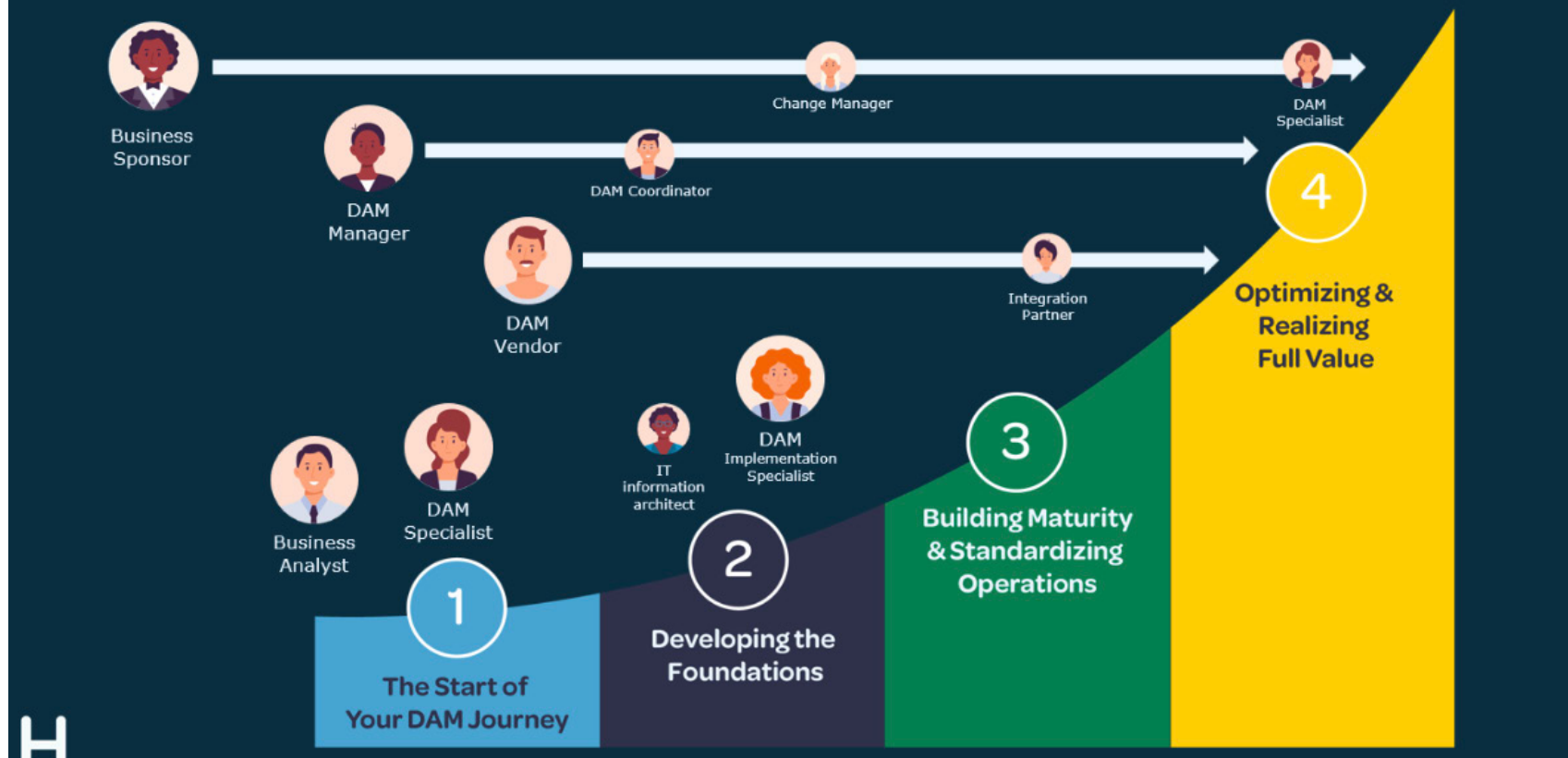
Your committee, dream team, DAM avengers assembled.
Via Kristina Huddart Consulting

Getting these folks together at the right stages in your DAM journey is your key to success. Luckily for you, we've got a two-part series on how to do exactly that.

How to assemble and hire your DAM dream team ▷

2 - Solidify Your Goals

Way before you whip out the corporate card, you'll need to solidify your organization's priorities for your new DAM. That requires collaboration across stakeholders—so talk through the four goals below and engage in these conversations early (and revisit regularly) in your vendor search.

- Archive or Activation

Are you looking for an excellent archive or a DAM to help you manage, share, and publish content? Identifying that early is going to eliminate a lot of vendors from your search.

- Productivity

Think about how your DAM can increase productivity—like increasing discoverability or simplifying your tech stack—and prioritize those features in your vendor evaluation.

- Innovation and Product Roadmap

Identify key areas you'd like to see improvements in—integrations, analytics, new use cases—that you believe will be important to your business in the future.

- Internal and External Users

Who will use your DAM? How will you protect branded assets when sharing externally? How do you need user permissions to change based on different use cases?

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3 - Understand the Buying Process

Research Strategically	Time and Commitment	Cost
You've already begun. Remember to research beyond the first page of Google since legacy DAMs tend to dominate the results. Ideally, you'll have the support of a DAM specialist who also understands the landscape.	Vendor selections can take anywhere from 1-6 months for smaller companies or up to a year for larger enterprise CPG companies. It requires technical and security evaluations, collaboration across departments, and countless meetings. Set clear expectations with your stakeholders on your evaluation timeline and ask your vendors about their implementation timeline. Don't rush into buying a DAM, they can be very difficult to change.	Be aware that you may run into the following cost models and additional charges: - Total # of users - Total users by type (power users vs. consumer users) - Pricing based on the number of concurrent users - Total number of nodes (where a node supports X number of concurrent users) - Additional charges for API access (more cost per integration) - Additional charges based on volume of assets being stored - Additional services/features - Managed implementation

"DAM isn't a side project." – Kristina Huddart

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4 - Look Out for Your Vendor Green Flags

Here are the vendor green flags you should be looking out for:

✅ **Offer and Vision**

The best approach to narrowing down your ideal vendor is ensuring their current offerings match your needs. Only then should you focus on their long-term vision and strategic direction. <u>The Forrester Wave report on DAM vendors</u> can help you decipher where DAMs are currently and where they're realistically going.

✅ **Comprehensive Demos**

Don't be afraid to ask questions during demos and push to see how important features actually work. If it does what they say it does, they should be able to show you, not just tell you.

✅ **Works for You**

Does this vendor have the features and capabilities that your business analyst and DAM specialist unearthed in their research, internal conversations, and IT reviews? And if your needs change, how adaptable is the platform to meet those?

✅ **Proactivity**

Good vendors know the internal concerns that come up in every vendor selection. They should be willing to address them and help you sell the platform to your internal teams. This support is a good sign of the kind of support you can expect moving forward.

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✅ **Transparent Roadmap**
You can't know everything, but you should have some idea of the development of the platform over the coming months and years. It's rare to find a platform that has every feature you're looking for—but they should be a transparent partner in innovation.

✅ **Customer References**
Seek references supplied by the vendor and your DAM specialist. Your specialist can also set up peer-to-peer meetings with managers and executives, so you can hear their authentic stories of using that vendor.

✅ **Strategic Support**
Good vendors will walk you through the steps needed to implement, run a DAM, and optimize using best practices. Competent DAM vendors will help you develop ongoing strategies for your business.

5 - Buy Your DAM

Once you've selected the right DAM for your needs, you'll need a request for proposal (RFP) to buy your DAM. Seek guidance for moving forward with your DAM specialist and ensure your DAM team and executive leadership is on board.

If you'd like help kicking off your RFP process Download our RFP template to get started.

To get the full breakdown on how to choose the right DAM for you, read our

Vendor Evaluation Guide

Chapter 3: The 9 Features You Can't Go Without

Certain DAM features are table stakes. Features like ingesting content, sharing between users, archiving content, and advanced search should be familiar. However, modern DAMs can do so much more. Here are the nine features you need to keep up with the constantly evolving world of asset management.

Publishing Capabilities

Are you publishing assets to your website? How about social media? Use your DAM's embedded publishing tools rather than downloading your assets from the system and manually uploading them to your channels. Publish assets to social, e-commerce, web, syndication, and email channels without leaving your DAM.

Once you publish content, use your DAM to track where that content is being used on channels like social media and email. This helps creative teams understand how assets are being used (or find the ones that never saw the light of day).

Sharing Content

It's common in the CPG world to share your product and marketing content with retailers who sell on your behalf. Making sure retailers have access to the latest and greatest approved content without burdening your internal teams is vital.

Understand how DAMs can dynamically segment content for certain users - or retailers - so it's not a manual burden. Equally as important is having an effortless way to curate and share content with retailers so they can easily access and understand, with context, how to maximize its use.

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Analytics and Tracking

Use your DAM to track content performance across campaigns and channels to understand better how your assets perform. Your DAM's analytics and tracking features link performance data with individual assets or campaigns. From there, it's much easier for your creative teams to notice the common elements unearthed by your AI tags, recreate the success of previous campaigns and understand how data like clicks, views, and purchases are related to creative choices. Equally important is tracking if and how retailers leverage the content you share with them and analyzing how your assets perform on their channels.

AI Capabiilities

AI is hot right now, and while still in its infancy, the productivity impact it can have on DAM is an exciting prospect. Generative AI, the ability to dynamically create content within seconds based on user inputs, is a powerful tool. Still, it comes with concerns around quality control, copyright and compliance, and ethical use. These pitfalls can be managed from within a DAM to help creative teams embrace Generative AI while reducing risk.

Other examples include machine learning at ingestion - scanning photo, video, and audio content to pull relevant metadata into the DAM. Your DAM can recognize and tag specific brands, individuals, topics, or complex concepts. Or embed subtitles or translation in 30+ languages, making any audio searchable in the DAM. AI features enhance discoverability and reduce the grunt work your teams have to do for every asset.

Robust Rights Management

Keep your company free from legal mishaps with DAM-native rights management. All your license holders or 'entities' and their associated rights live in the platform, so you can control who has access and what assets they can view and download.

You can even automatically hide assets from collections and search once they've expired—and never risk unlicensed or unapproved content being published ever again. And because rights management is directly tied to each asset, you no longer need to pay for external rights management systems or an expensive percentage of your legal team's time. It just works.

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Native Workflow Automation

Simplify Slack threads and eliminate third-party workflow management software. DAMs not only host and manage your content but help you through your workflow woes. Mark up, comment, review, and approve assets from the platform—from print images to rendered video assets. Use system notifications and workflow rules to automatically trigger review rounds, making collaborating with all the right folks easy. Keep track of who has reviewed what and who still needs approval from the DAM.

Drag-and-Drop System Configurations

Ensure that any DAM you invest in comes with customizable backend hubs. The primary benefit of a drag-and-drop system and metadata settings is that your DAM manager no longer needs the help of IT to create new tagging structures, asset collections, or add new metadata fields. Managers can adjust the user interface and experience at any time—changing how your platform appears to users based on permissions, role-based rules, or usability.

Continuous Integration, Continuous Deployment (CI/CD)

When pushing a major update, you don't need to worry about interrupted service, deployment, or complex processes. Using the CI/CD approach to DAM systems, every update goes live immediately without additional cost to the customer or involvement with IT. That means large enterprise DAM users receive faster system updates, more new features, and fewer service interruptions.

Content Production Tools

Approved users can clip, crop, edit, mask, and splice content to make changes to assets. You can do this natively within the system or integrate your DAM with creative suites to get the full power of content creation right from your DAM. And because your DAM is continually archiving every version of your assets, any change is reversible.

Chapter 4: DAM Use Cases for CPG

There are plenty of opportunities across your organization for your DAM to simplify, centralize, and automate processes for you. Here are some common challenges and opportunities you might encounter in the CPG space and the use cases that DAM can solve.

Use Case	Problem	DAM Solution
Improving asset discoverability	Your users struggle to find assets in their current systems. It takes multiple attempts to find what they're looking for.	With features like AI metadata tagging and smart search, discoverability is a breeze. You can even connect your PIM system with your DAM to automatically attach product information to each asset—from there, everything from colors and sizes to brand names and SKU numbers are searchable in the DAM.
Improving content reuse	You find it impossible to organize assets for reuse. A lack of discoverability in the DAM makes content reuse difficult. And once an asset leaves your DAM, there's no way to mark it for potential reuse in future campaigns.	Use your DAM metadata to your advantage. Create an automated "reuse" workflow by applying rules to automatically tag content based on file properties, content, and embedded data when it's uploaded or re-uploaded. This will make it easier to keep reused videos and images organized.
Maintaining content rights and licensing agreements	You can't be sure that every rights-managed asset featured in your global campaigns today is being used according to its license. You don't have features to react dynamically to your rights or licensing changes. Legal reviews and headaches inevitably ensue.	Built-in rights management in your DAM pairs rights details and licenses with your assets—allowing you to edit access to content based on campaigns, teams, brands, geographies, and more. Receive alerts if licenses are about to expire, or if someone shares content that wasn't meant to be published or downloaded. Avoid legal team reviews, overlong contract reviews, and copyright infringement.

Use Case	Problem	DAM Solution
Sharing content efficiently	Sharing product and marketing assets with retailers, agencies, partners, and other third parties is a manual and time-consuming process. Once shared, there's no visibility into how - or if - the assets are utilized.	Assets can be dynamically curated, updated, and shared with a third-party based on their user profile. There is no need to manually update files as the DAM can always provide the latest version through a secure or public web link. Insights into if and how the content is being used allow CPG brands to understand the right amount and type of content to share.
Publishing content to channels and tracking performance	Your process for publishing assets is inefficient. Publishing assets to channels like ecommerce sites is time-consuming and manual—product information, tags, and analytics either have to be manually collected or they get lost along the way. As a result, there's no way to track or measure where content ends up or how well it's performing. Most campaign analytics never make their way back to creative teams.	With a built-in content delivery network (CDN), DAMs can automatically push content to web, social platforms, and other channels. Your DAM even collects real-time insights into how your content is performing across channels and campaigns to give a unified view of asset performance. These insights help creative teams build better assets and understand their content ROI.

The world's most engaging CPG brands have mastered the art of content reuse. It's your turn. Flip through

The Art of Reusing Content

Use Case	Problem	DAM Solution
One unified view of content	Your data resides in multiple systems. From asset creation and approvals to product information and metadata—it's hard to get one view of everything.	Many modern DAMs are configurable and can easily integrate with your existing applications (like your PIM system) and repositories. Maintain the integrity of assets and data as they move between systems and establish a central source of data truth.
API integrations between systems	You know there are useful integrations for your DAM, but you don't know where to start.	Connect your DAM with creative suites, PIMs, CDNs, CMSs, and more, with new APIs added by DAM vendors all the time. You can even get DAMs with built-in CDNs, so there is virtually no latency when viewing, downloading, and publishing assets anywhere in the world.
Maintaining a secure, updated tech stack	Keeping your DAM updated requires costly downtime. Updates and new integrations are complex projects that cost time and money.	A DAM with cloud-native, continuous integration, continuous deployment (CI/CD) technology launches any new changes without downtime or IT intervention. You'll keep your DAM updated with current technologies and security features without additional costs.

Chapter 5: Level Up Your DAM With These 6 Integrations

Many DAMs fail because users can't figure out how to integrate their manual workflows (and familiar technology) with an unfamiliar, all-encompassing system. The right integrations can make jobs across your organization easier and simpler. You just have to figure out the right ones for you.

Talk with your IT architect about integrating some of these systems with your DAM:

## 1 - Product Information Management (PIM)

A PIM system manages all the data you need to put a product to market, like SKU numbers, product specifications, colors, dimensions, and more.

Integrating a PIM with your DAM is valuable because it serves several purposes:

• Matches assets to SKU so all product information is linked to the asset.
• All assets become searchable using any PIM data, automatically increasing discoverability.
• You can quickly package product data and assets to publish a product details page (PDP) directly to e-commerce platforms like Amazon or your website without leaving your DAM.

There's a reason why a PIM integration is one of the most popular with modern DAMs— there are so many possibilities.
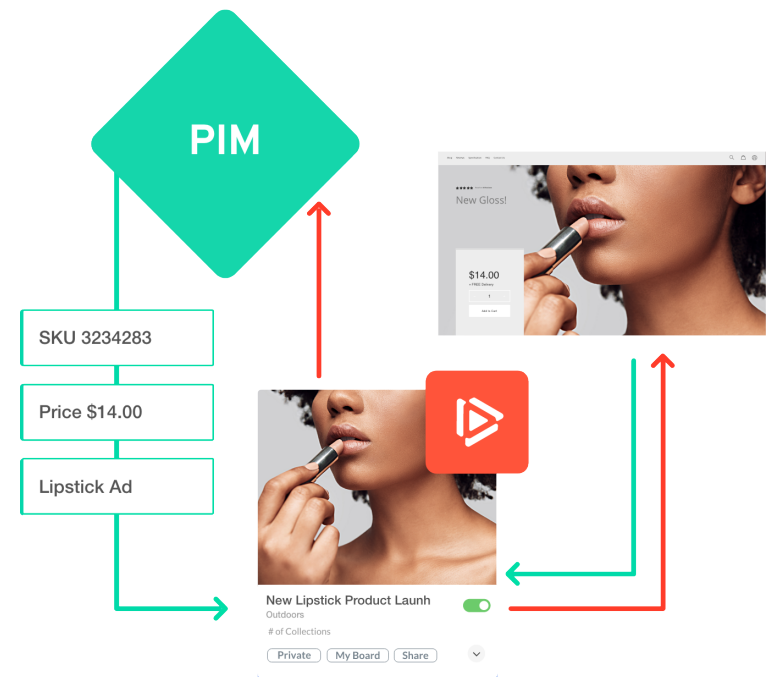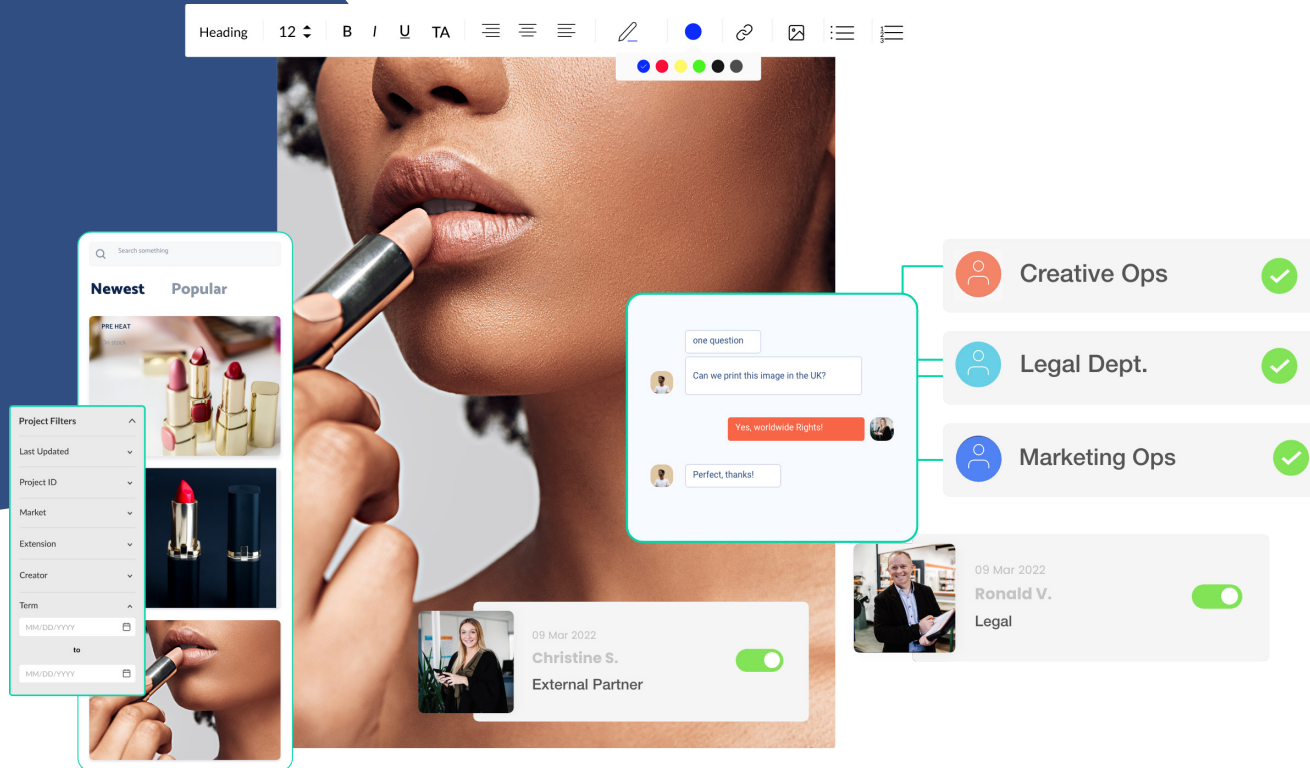
2 - Project, Campaign, and Workflow Management Software

What happens when you connect the software that manages your projects, tasks, campaigns, and process to your DAM? Well, the immediate benefit is enabling searchable access to all the content in your DAM at the click of a button. Linking assets without leaving their workflow system is very handy for creative teams. Similarly, you can create approval workflows that seamlessly bounce back and forth between your DAM and project management systems—removing the need to download and upload assets between systems manually.

This integration also transports essential project or task metadata into the DAM—think campaign names, product descriptions, task descriptions, and comments. This contextual metadata increases searchability and attributes helpful information to each asset or campaign in the DAM.

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3 - Digital Rights Management (DRM)

Many modern DAMs already have rights management features built-in (like, Tenovos). But if you're managing a lot of licensed content and your current DAM doesn't help, this integration will simplify many processes. A DRM integration allows you to:

• Keep track of who you have purchased from/sold rights to, the details of those agreements, and when they expire—all without leaving the DAM.

• Automatically attach agreement details (like approved use cases and regions) to the assets so your DAM will only give users access to approved content.

• Automatically pull access to content once it expires—removing it from search or only allowing it to be viewed for inspiration but not downloaded.

DRM is an important integration to protect your assets from unauthorized users and your company from the risks of misusing licensed content.
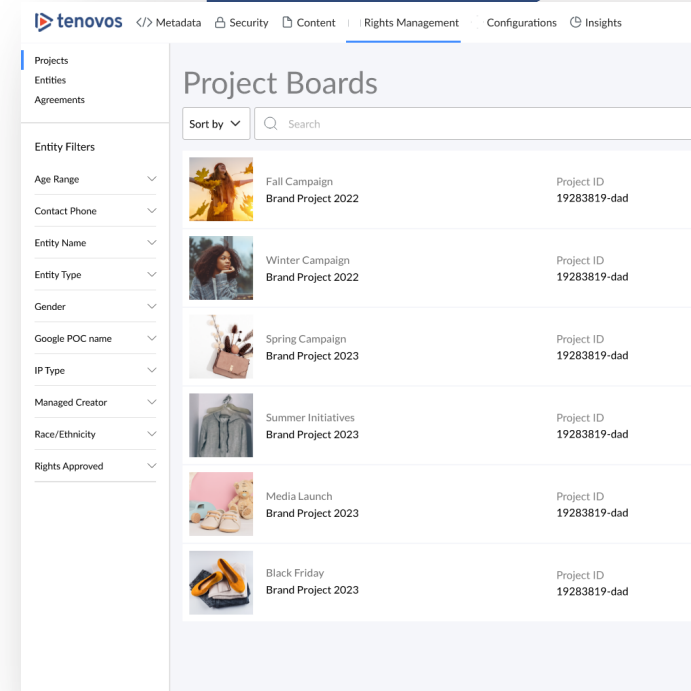
Learn more about DRM and DAM ▷

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4 - Creative Suites

This connection removes several extra steps for your creative teams as they're creating and editing assets. Instead of manually downloading assets, creating content, and reuploading them to the DAM (and doing that process over and over with each review round), an integration with your Adobe suite puts those tools directly in the platform.

Now you can open and modify assets using your creative tools, without switching apps. This is a huge time saver, improves version control of assets, and ensures only approved assets are used in the creative process.

6 - Content Management System (CMS)

Many organizations upload assets to their CMS to publish to their channels, but a CMS isn't very good at keeping those assets organized. When you connect your DAM to your CMS, you can link relevant metadata to assets, making it easier to find assets and move them between systems.

This integration also maintains the DAM as your single source of truth for approved content, saving creative teams from content mishaps in your CMS. Better organization of your assets makes publishing easier.

Resources for Your Next Steps

Project Brief

A collection of questions your stakeholder group should answer before selecting (or implementing) your new DAM. It will help create alignment between your DAM and the wider business objectives, and also act as an outline for key functional requirements of the new platform.

Download the Project Brief ▷

Implementation Checklist

A checklist that outlines important steps during the implementation process that will help improve DAM user adoption after the platform is live. Use this as a guide, and add steps as needed for your organization's unique requirements.

Download the Checklist ▷

Communications Plan

A plan that includes timelines and milestones for communicating with your DAM stakeholders, along with a communications schedule and messaging you can use to drive user adoption.

Download the Communications Plan ▷

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The DAM Essentials for CPG

There you have it—your comprehensive guide to DAM. With your new ability to understand metadata, determine your CPG use cases, and understand key features and integrations, you have the tools to create the DAM of your dreams. Use the chapters and resources in this book to guide you through your modern DAM journey. CPG can be complicated, but choosing the right DAM to support you doesn't have to be.

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Learn more about how we can help you achieve your goals