

A photograph of a businessman in a dark suit and blue striped tie, holding a tablet. A glowing blue cityscape graphic is overlaid on the tablet screen.

# Digital-Asset-Management- DAM-Readiness-Model

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## **Acknowledgements:**

Several DAM subject matter experts, practitioners, and consultants contributed to this document. Special thanks to Pranshu Jain for his key insights and guidance.

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## Executive Summary

Creative initiatives are an integral part of product or service life cycle. Such initiatives have their own set of challenges and issues and can become increasingly complex.

In this paper, we explore common challenges and issues in creative processes and how these can be addressed leveraging our proposed incremental and graded model. The model defines five levels across five categories and 19 dimensions. Improving their capabilities or readiness level on these 19 dimensions is a key enabler for organizations wanting to successfully implement their creative processes.

**Target audience of this paper are Senior IT, Marketing, and Business Executives** who are embarking on DAM rollout journey or who see the gaps in current process in terms quality, time to market and standardization.

If you are a **DAM Practitioner**, you can get in touch with us

to know about readiness model and to learn how you can use the model in your context.

### Why Organizations Commission Creative Processes and What Are the Challenges?

There are number of business use cases that require creative processes and include creation, management, and distribution of multimedia (audio, video, images) assets. For instance, a marketing collaboration process in which multiple stakeholders work to make creatives which are then distributed to external channels - B2C, B2B or a combination of both. Digital Asset Management (DAM) is a set of enabling technologies and processes that seamlessly drive creative initiatives.

Creative projects are designed with a specific purpose in mind. The triggers for creative projects vary from organization to organization. Table 1 comprises a list of common triggers for creative projects.

New Offering	Consumer Engagement	Innovation
Launching a product	Social campaigns	Relaunch of a product
Launching a service	Blogs	In store/outdoor events
Launching a site/channel	UGC	Seasonal campaigns
Opening a store	Email campaigns	
	Video campaigns	

**Table 1: Common triggers for commissioning creative processes**

However, as the complexity (size, requirements) of creative initiatives increases, many issues begin to emerge such as:

- Increased time-to-market.
- Higher cost of production.
- Reduced effectiveness and agility.
- Low level of reuse leading to inefficiencies.
- Poor campaign consistency.

As a result, the intended outcomes are not realized, and projects fail to deliver on their objectives. Our research and experience across clients offers insights into the reasons behind the challenges. These include:

- Inconsistent creative processes within multiple initiatives for a brand or across brands, leading to missed deadlines and delays.
- Delayed business approvals, lack of collaboration, and absence of alignment between marketing, creative, and cross functional partners on strategy.
- Inefficient feedback mechanisms.
- Siloed campaigns and ad-hoc requests for new creative processes.

## Achieving Creative Acceleration

Creative Acceleration is a continuous process where an organization reduces the friction and improves collaboration to optimize quality, speed of creative development, reuse, and consistency in messaging.

A creative process or campaign life cycle encompasses: creative briefing, ideation, brainstorming concepts, discussions about contracts, and pre-production and production activities. All these steps are usually executed outside of a DAM system and consume a large chunk of resources. To accelerate a creative process, an organization needs to address issues across the complete life cycle.

Figure 1 depicts the key building blocks needed to achieve creative acceleration.

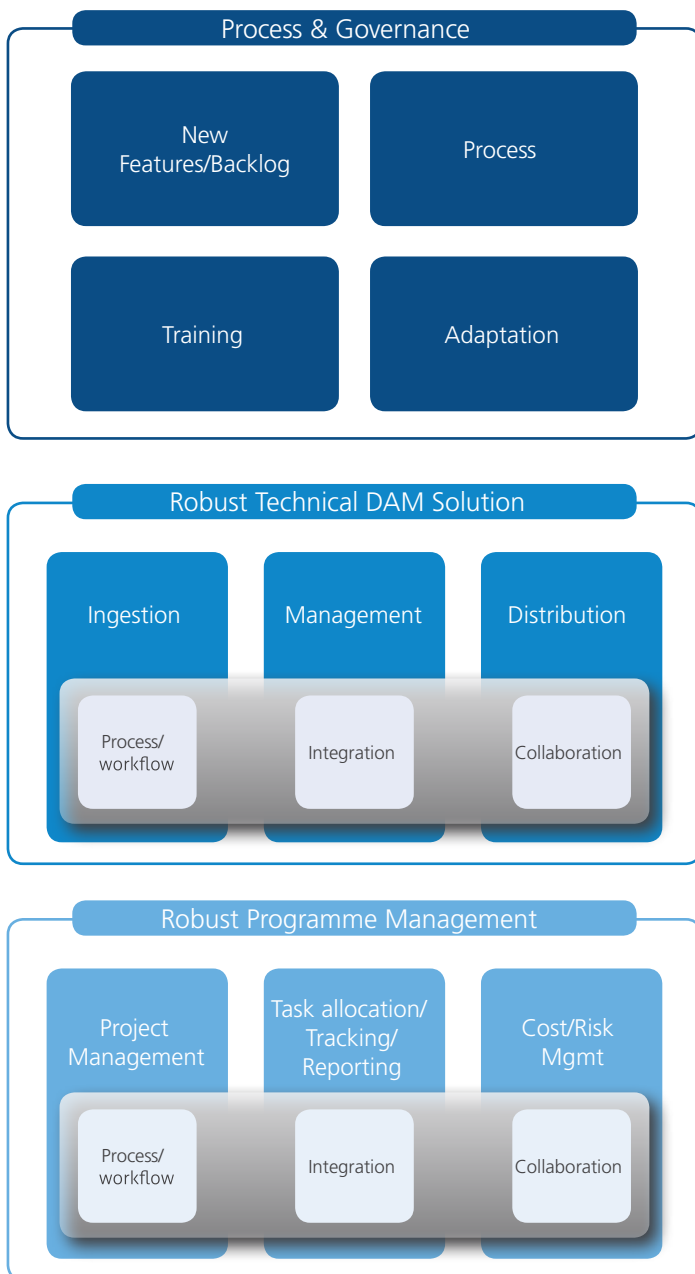


Figure 1: Key building blocks to achieve creative acceleration

1. Let's deep dive into the three key areas critical for a successful creative initiative

## #1 Robust technical DAM solution

The key facets of a DAM life cycle are ingestion, management, and distribution. All of these facets and their dimensions are discussed in detail in the next section. However, each facet requires processes, collaboration and integration. For example:

- If a user wants to work jointly with other users (to shortlist the assets or during retouching process), he/she should be able to collaborate within the system.
- If assets are targeted for distribution to multiple channels like social, in-store, web or on-site, there is a need to integrate with other systems.

## #2 Robust Program Management (PM)

Program Management (PM) is key to predictive and accelerated creative processes. It helps organizations streamline the processes which take place outside of DAM. The key facets of PM include:

- Planning: define the project charter, timeline, and resource planning.
- Execution: task allocation, tracking to closure, identifying the roadblocks, and mitigate the risks.
- Reporting: enabling different stakeholders at different levels to view respective dashboards, and generating reports to assess the progress and risks associated with the project.

PM can be enabled by tools with in-built processes, and integration and collaboration capabilities designed to help the execution team. These tools should be well integrated with enterprise applications, be able to define organization specific processes and flows, and enable collaboration among stakeholders.

## #3 Process and governance

In a creative project where PM and DAM tools are not well integrated, the PM tool is used across processes spanning briefing through production, with control for later phases passing to the DAM tool. In a mature implementation, these two tools should work together, making well-defined integration a crucial success factor. As creative processes are unique to each organization, it's **important to design them in alignment with the organizational structure and business model.**

Let's see how our proposed model "**Readiness Model**" identifies a set of areas that are required by an organization to be successful in DAM initiatives. We have termed these areas "Readiness Dimensions". By working on these dimensions, organizations can better position themselves to successfully implement creative processes.

This model takes an asset life cycle approach and identifies capabilities required for different stages of asset life cycle - from its creation to management and distribution.

## The Creative Acceleration Readiness Model: An Overview

The Readiness Model (illustrated in Figure 2) breaks down the aspects required for success into 19 dimensions of readiness, spanning five categories:

- Asset creation
- Asset management
- Asset distribution
- Infrastructure
- Strategic factors

The five categories, along with 19 dimensions (defined in appendix), together describe the readiness factors required by any organization to successfully implement creative processes.

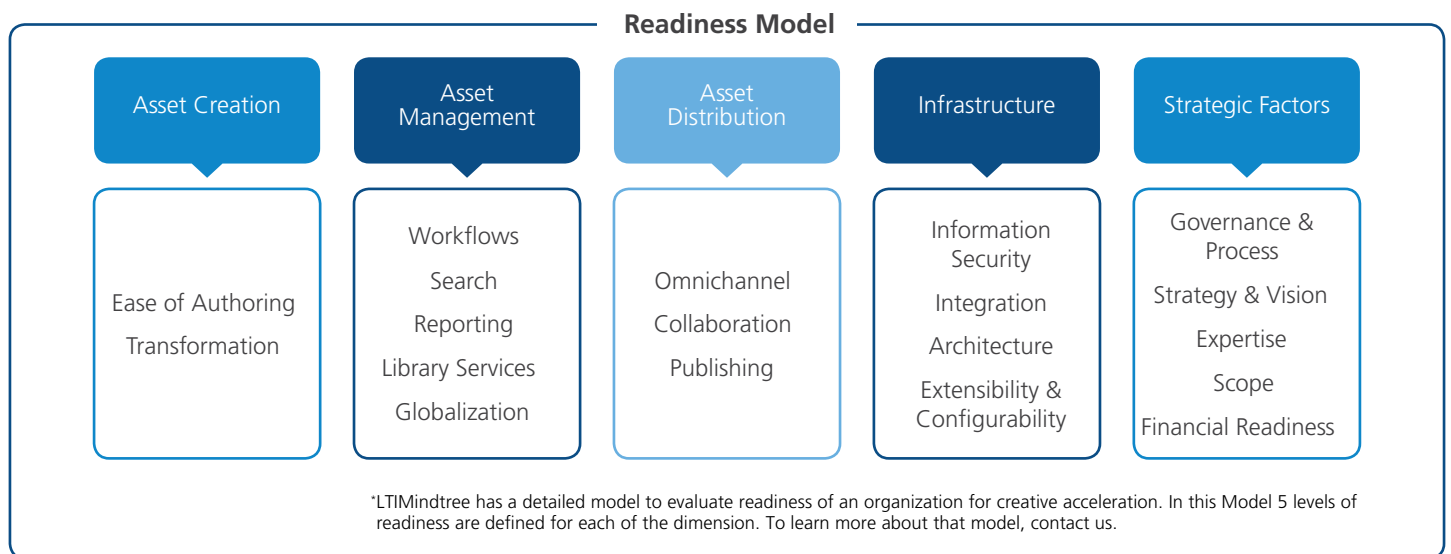


Figure 2: The Creative Acceleration Readiness Model and its dimensions.

By addressing key problem areas, an organization can improve its overall creative processes and achieve creative acceleration. Table 2 describes possible approaches to tackling common problem areas. Each approach can be successfully undertaken by addressing specific readiness dimension discussed earlier.

Challenge	Solution	Mapped "Readiness Dimensions"
Inconsistent creative processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well documented and consistent campaign, product, and creative briefs accessible to stakeholders.</li> <li>• Cross-functional touch points, handoffs, and well-defined lead time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expertise</li> <li>• Workflow</li> <li>• Process and governance</li> <li>• Omni-channel</li> <li>• Library services</li> </ul>
Lack of collaboration and high time to market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define clear step-by-step progression and gated-checks with time limits.</li> <li>• Designate briefing moments and early stakeholder collaboration, style guides, and templates for localization.</li> <li>• Delineate process to delegate to local markets and redistribute those creatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governance and processes</li> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Globalization</li> <li>• Strategic factors</li> </ul>
Siloed campaigns and ad-hoc creative requests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure detailed concept planning, including channels and regions.</li> <li>• Enable reuse and standardization through processes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governance and processes</li> <li>• Asset creation</li> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Globalization</li> </ul>
Inefficient feedback mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase tool-based collaboration with time limits for feedback.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Infrastructure</li> <li>• Workflows</li> <li>• Process and governance</li> </ul>

## The Readiness Model: Levels and Dimensions

Each category and dimension comprises five readiness levels (described in Table 3) that define how ready an organization is to ensure success in their creative initiatives. Each level defines a graded set of capabilities. For each dimension and level, the model also defines characteristics a la other information management-oriented models (Pelz-Sharpe et al., 2009; Durga, 2012). Using these characteristics, an organization can analyze and decide which level best matches their state of readiness.

Category	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Asset creation	Simple authoring processes; little experience in using DAM systems.	Advanced authoring capabilities such as drag and drop; improved capabilities with experience in handling repository-based systems.	Authoring capabilities include ability to ingest assets using native desktop tools, with the ability to support different types of assets.	Accelerated content ingestion to enable regional teams to contribute assets. Support for advanced encoding and transcoding capabilities, dynamic renditions as well as support for RAW images.	Seamless ingestion of content along with reporting and support for all asset types, including emerging types such as 3D images. Continuous monitoring and improvement.
Asset management	Either non-existent or really basic capabilities. Simple workflows (single-step tasks). If DAM tools exist, out-of-the-box capabilities are mostly used without much effort to customize them.	Advanced capabilities in asset management. Advanced workflows (for instance, multiple steps) with a much better understanding of metadata concepts and how it can add value. Usage of workflows for translations. Advanced search - no longer simply keyword-based.	Highly improved process management capabilities with workflows being used to ingest content automatically and for translation requirements. Some advancements to taxonomy and search services with features such as faceted search.	Further advancements with ability to create custom and complex processes. Enhanced search with features such as autocomplete and auto suggest, image search, and so on. Reporting requirements are more complex at this level, making integration with external reporting systems an important requirement.	Artificial Intelligence is widely used for different functionalities. Machine-learning based techniques are used to auto tag assets, for analytics, metadata optimization and so forth. The AI/ML algorithms are constantly trained, updated, and improved as and when additional data is generated.
Asset distribution	Mostly limited to desktops using simple publishing mechanisms and basic collaboration services such as file and folder sharing.	Distribution moves beyond desktops to other channels, with improved publishing and collaboration which includes collections (and not just simple files).	Growing understanding of importance of non-traditional channels. Native mobile apps and delivery to social and marketing channels becomes important. This is accompanied by improvements in publishing capabilities.	API-based asset distribution for asset distribution across channels and devices. Can publish not just assets but also whole packages with related assets and dependencies. Collaboration moves beyond asset and folder sharing to include social sharing, ratings, and reviews.	Includes distribution to offline channels -- store screens, point-of-sale integration in addition to mobile and tablets. Accompanied by advanced multi-level publishing and collaboration capabilities that include all types of stakeholders.
Infrastructure	Simple role based security, not many integrations, and simple configurations are key characteristics at this level.	Security includes encryption and SSO. integrations span multiple systems and are custom in nature and there is growing importance of cloud infrastructure.	Integration is a major focus area and instead of ad-hoc integrations, there is a well-defined framework for integrating with external applications. The architecture scales up to handle multiple geographies and data centers. In addition, the focus is on improving extensibility of applications via configurations as well as APIs.	Compliance with regulations is an important focus area. Integration capabilities at level three are further fine-tuned.	Continuous monitoring of infrastructure and ability to scale up is a key focus area. Best practices for security, architecture, and integration are in place.
Strategic factors	Since the organization is only beginning to get into DAM, governance and strategy are underdeveloped. Some employees know the basics and their efforts are usually drive DAM initiatives, which are mostly department-specific.	Organization begins to understand and take baby steps in defining a strategy and vision. This leads to some informal governance, better understanding, as well as knowledge of DAM systems and increased scope.	A well-defined strategy is in place. There is a long-term vision for using DAM and management is fully committed to the success of DAM initiatives. Documented processes and procedures, better IT and business alignment, and inclusion of all external stakeholders in DAM initiatives are the other characteristics of this level.	The focus is on financial readiness and tightening of governance processes. Financial readiness includes sound understanding of project financing, non-traditional pricing mechanisms (such as renting as opposed to buying), and revenue or charge-back mechanisms.	DAM is a key strategic initiative, at par with other big initiatives. It is not just an IT initiative, but also a business initiative, so DAM governance is well integrated with overall IT and business governance.

**Table 3: Summary of categories and levels**





### How to Apply the DAM Readiness Model the Right Way

Before we launch into the model application specifics, it is important to note that in addition to DAM technology, organizations need to address several other factors related to business and strategy to ensure a successful DAM initiative. However, it is almost always impossible to address all factors at the same time due to priorities or budgeting and resource limitations. The fact is not all factors are equally important. Often, it is not desirable to take a big-bang approach to DAM implementation. A gradual, incremental approach can prove more beneficial. The objective should never be to achieve level 5 for every single dimension.

Therefore, this model proposes an approach with multiple levels; wherein each level brings in progressively higher benefits.

There are several scenarios for which the DAM readiness model can be used. Some examples include:

1. An organization can use it to assess its current state of readiness across different dimensions. For instance, analysis might uncover insights such as: even though the organization is excellent in terms of technology maturity (level 5), its processes are still at level 1. This would explain why the organization is not able to reap the benefits even after spending millions on cutting edge technology. Leveraging the DAM readiness model in this case, can reveal the areas that the organization needs to work on.
2. Once an organization understands its current state, it can decide the target level for each dimension. In the above example, the organization might decide it needs to work on its processes and move to level 3 for process management.
3. This model can also be used on an ongoing basis to track progress - say every six months.

### Dam: Enabling Creative Fulfillment through Self-Analysis

The DAM readiness model is a great asset for organizations as it enables organizations to perform self-analysis and benchmarking across nineteen dimensions.

Once the self-analysis is completed, an organization will have two sets of conclusions that will drive the necessary changes to improve its creative processes:

1. Current state based on the readiness model.
2. Future or target state based on the readiness model.

This information will help the organization find, analyze and prioritize DAM capabilities necessary to achieve creative acceleration.

These dimensions, when used in conjunction with selection and implementation of DAM technology, standardized processes, robust project management practices and holistic processes that encompass DAM and Project Management, can further boost creative acceleration.

### References

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## 11 Appendix

Table: Dimensions of Model

Dimensions	Description
<b>Asset Authoring</b>	This refers to the abilities required to create content and bring it under the control of a DAM system. Key features include authoring interface and capabilities for automatic ingestion.
<b>Asset Transformation</b>	Usually many different renditions and transformations of an asset are required in any creative process. For example, different sized images are required for different channels. You also need different preview capabilities. Capability to transform/render the versions on demand or at the time of ingestion becomes a key requirement. Configurable renditions for various types of file types including Indesign, Photoshop, images, videos, and pdf are considered as common use cases.
<b>Workflows</b>	Workflows can be useful in increasing collaboration, automating technical process or implementing a business process. Configurable workflows allow reuse of and implementation of complex processes.  Asset Approval, Publishing Workflow, Asset Transformation workflow are some of the commonly used workflows.
<b>Library Services</b>	This dimension covers the so called "repository services" and are found to some extent in all leading DAM solutions. This includes versioning of assets, custom metadata definition capability, bulk metadata update tools, etc. Though common features, they are very critical to smoothly performing day to day operations.
<b>Globalization</b>	A global organization needs to serve localized content to each region. To do so, the capability to organize content as well as the capability to convert global to localized content is key. Localization can be automated to some extent and/or can be done manually. Automation can accelerate the process of localization.
<b>Search</b>	Assets that can't be found are not useful. So, a fine-grained search functionality is an important feature. Search can either be a simple keyword-based search or equipped with more advanced capabilities, like facets and wildcard support, but is almost always a key capability.
<b>Reporting</b>	Reporting is a key criterion to understanding different aspects of a DAM initiative. It includes simple reports, charts and dashboards, health monitoring, and advanced analytics using relatively advanced AI and ML capabilities.
<b>Omnichannel</b>	Refers to the ability to have a seamless, integrated, uniform, and unified strategy across multiple channels.
<b>Publishing</b>	Capability for publishing (and unpublishing) digital assets to any channel at any time.
<b>Collaboration</b>	A creative process always requires multiple teams and people to work together collaboratively. Hence collaboration capabilities like file and folder sharing as well as social collaboration become important.
<b>Information Security</b>	This refers to the extent to which security implications are understood and appropriate procedures are in place.
<b>Integration</b>	A DAM system often gets integrated with external tools and services such as SSO/IAM systems, PIM, marketing channels, and creative tools.
<b>Architecture</b>	Architecture includes capability to satisfy non-functional requirements such as scalability, extensibility, and reliability. Also includes cloud and infrastructure readiness.
<b>Extensibility and Configurability</b>	This refers to capabilities related to extending the DAM system. Key aspects here are availability of APIs, integration with IDEs, upgrades/patching, source code management, application development, and so on.
<b>Governance and Process</b>	This refers to the extent to which policies and procedures have been defined and implemented within the organization. Policies and procedures include standard operating processes, exception handling, organization structure, information flow, and Service Level Agreements (SLAs). Key aspects include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• Risk management</li> <li>• Escalation and reporting</li> <li>• Business-IT alignment</li> <li>• Project and program management</li> </ul>
<b>Strategy and Vision</b>	An organization should have a strategy as well as a roadmap for using DAM for meeting specific objectives. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mission</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Top management commitment</li> </ul>
<b>Expertise</b>	This refers to IT and business expertise. IT expertise includes knowledge of core IT areas as well as DAM specific expertise. Business expertise refers to knowledge of DAM creative processes as well as domain knowledge.
<b>Scope</b>	Scope refers to the extent of usage of DAM systems across the enterprise as well as types of stakeholders covered. DAM systems can be used across a wide variety of stakeholders, but not all organizations use it for all types of users.
<b>Financial Readiness</b>	Financial readiness refers to an organization's ability to understand aspects related to costing, budgeting as well as revenues. These include a thorough understanding of upfront costs, revenue generation, billing mechanisms, maintenance costs, upgrade costs, licensing costs, and other similar aspects.

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