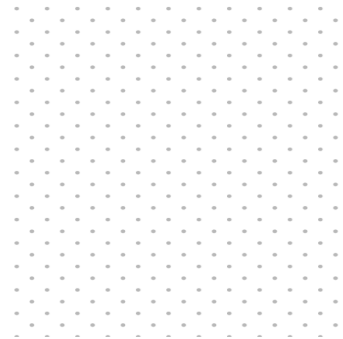


# Brace yourself for the Third Wave of DAM



# Brace yourself for the **Third Wave of DAM**

Moving beyond DAM as Content Hub: How DAM plays a key role in your digital transformation success



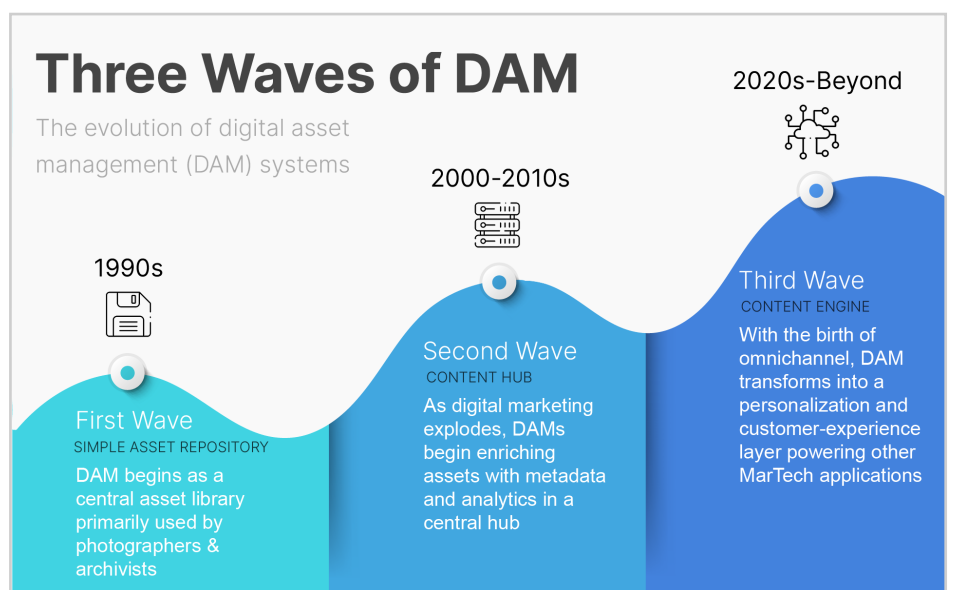
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Digital asset management (DAM) started over 20 years ago as a storage and archival tool. It has evolved into a central hub in many enterprises — and is now ready to be a backbone system in your digital-first future.

There is a coming disruption in how businesses work and communicate. As enterprises refresh their DAM technology, they have an opportunity to lay the foundation for that change.

For example, when it comes to digital experiences, companies can roll out another boring, old DAM system from 10 years ago — and risk being outcompeted by more efficient and tech-enabled competitors — or they can move to a more modern system.

DAM buyers need to look to systems with dynamic media and workflow automation, targeting, and personalization. Without the proper DAM infrastructure, marketing and business objectives for 2023 and beyond will remain out of reach.



## First Wave: Simple Asset Repository

Beginning in the late 1990s, the tools now called DAMs were originally engineered as libraries for photography, audio, and video assets. The original end users of DAMs were usually photographers, media creators, and archivists.

The primary use cases for original DAM systems was simply to provide a platform where users could upload, catalog, search, browse, and download assets.

As the utility and functionality of DAM systems evolved, marketers adopted DAM for the purposes of brand management.



## Second Wave: Content Hub

As we entered the new millennium and headed into the 2010s, digital marketing exploded, and so marketing departments became the primary buyer of DAMs in enterprises. Just archiving your marketing assets wasn't enough — digital marketers needed to connect the DAM to various distribution channels for their content.

This drove the Second Wave of DAM: Content Hubs. While this innovation is good for reducing marketing silos, it still limits the overall power of DAM. In order to get a Content Hub to provide more value, enterprises are often forced to buy additional systems and complex integration services.

The Content Hub approach is still driving most investments in the DAM space to this day. Unfortunately, these systems are limited to supporting a linear content “production line” from creation to distribution for individual pieces of content.



## Third Wave: Content Engine

Third Wave DAMs operate by coordinating modular content (as compared to the linear production lines of Second Wave DAM systems). This allows content to be delivered in a rapid, Just-in-Time (JIT) fashion.

Content Engine DAMs accomplish this by providing the digital experience layer with the right fuel to automate modular content components. For example, the Content Engine DAM can assemble, disassemble, and reassemble the correct content components according to the audience and publication medium to which they will be delivered. This would allow users to set copy, image, resolution, aspect ratios, etc. for channels automatically.

As entire enterprises (not just marketing teams) move to a digital-first environment, Third Wave DAMs also offer workflow automations, two-way integrations with other enterprise systems, A.I. services, and configurable purpose-built interfaces that allow other parts of the enterprise to leverage the platform for their own digital transformations.

Third Wave DAMs offer Chief Marketing Officers an opportunity to spearhead an enterprise-wide digital transformation. They provide an easily configurable system that can check all of the marketing team's boxes, as well as expand to meet the needs of other departments.

Outdated DAM systems can create ripple effects throughout the organization. Meaning that failure to make this move and selecting another Second Wave DAM places your enterprise at risk of falling behind the competition.



### Buyer Beware

There are DAMs claiming to offer Third Wave capabilities that lack the infrastructure and architecture to deliver on this promise.

Outdated metadata and taxonomy systems that make it difficult to find assets and require admins to manually perform asset clean-up will render even the most sophisticated DX systems and integrations useless.

Read recent customer reviews and speak with existing customers to find out the truth about how a DAM system operates.



# DAM as an engine for **customer experience**



## **2** DAM as a Content Engine

Your DAM system must be implemented as a Content Engine that powers not only the creation and distribution of digital assets, but also attaches the right data to these assets to enable personalized customer experiences.

While DAMs are now multi-faceted engines, they are not the digital experience layer for the end consumer. A typical failing of enterprises attempting to provide personalized customer experiences is that they buy expensive DX or e-commerce platforms, but they do not do the more “mundane” work of getting digital assets, data, and demographics aligned to enable relevant targeting and personalization.

To capitalize on the Third Wave of DAM, you must strategically evolve your DAM from a storage system to a **system of services** that promotes engagement.

To have a successful DX layer, your DAM engine needs to provide it with the best possible fuel in the form of asset and metadata alignment between systems.

Does your next campaign need that product video in five different formats for an Instagram Story, a television ad, a giant high-resolution subway poster, a print magazine full-page image, and a digital banner? Rev up your DAM engine, because it can provide all five automatically.

Your success is dependent on a deep awareness of customer activity and preferences, and empathy towards how consumers are thinking and feeling. When using DAM as a Content Engine, it's possible to plant seeds for optimal consumer experience in the earliest stages, when you're initially creating and managing the assets that will shape the digital environment.

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## **But where are most enterprises today?**

Most enterprises are currently using a series of disconnected point solutions to accomplish hyper-specialized tasks. Using multiple systems often results in a series of disconnected steps along the digital supply chain. Handoffs are poor, manual work is required, and time-to-market is hindered or slowed down. These disparate systems and applications increase costs, reduce margins, and impact the ability to scale and personalize marketing campaigns.

The goal for enterprise organizations is a powerful and interconnected application ecosystem that is largely automated and able to apply intelligent rules to common scenarios.

# Characteristics of a modern, Third Wave DAM



## 3 Integration, connection, and automation

The reality of using your DAM as a Content Engine is less about the features your system possesses, and more about ***how you use the features and the API to integrate, connect, and automate across the enterprise***. It's also about how the interplay between your DAM and DX systems allows end users to easily build digital experiences independently without coding expertise.

Renowned MarTech commentator and blogger Scott Brinker has said that “In the age of A.I. and no-code, marketers can increasingly wield the power of ‘code’ themselves to create experiences.”

What does this mean, practically speaking? The sorts of digital experiences that previously required developers can now be assembled in a browser, by less technical and more customer-focused marketing resources.

A few features of Third Wave DAM systems include:

## **No-code configurability**

While many enterprise-grade Second Wave DAMs were capable of being configured for particular workflows, this process often involved leaning on strained IT or Dev support.

Third Wave systems should offer the ability for the end user to configure their own DAM for new departments, teams, and individual users. This is made possible by a modular structure that gives the ability to turn features on/off and customize them without requiring the development of new APIs.

## **Component-level content management**

Being able to manage content in discrete pieces or components enables ease of omnichannel deployments. Now the same component can be re-used or adapted for various outputs — all from a single source. Marketers now have interfaces to manage these components, versus having to go into code files that contain content.



Instacart creates video building blocks that are stored within their DAM. They often create subclips of longer videos and export those shorter clips from the DAM. Those short clips can be mixed and matched, letting Instacart build out a huge variety of components for different outputs.

They even create multiple variations for each channel to A/B test different versions of marketing materials, quickly building a variety of content to share on multiple platforms.



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## Compound and personalized distribution

The content components described above eventually need to be assembled in a smart way that brings alive whatever you're selling for the customer or prospect.

For example, a video game studio may produce a game with over 2,000 voice lines that need to be translated into 20 different languages. A Third Wave system can not only manage those translations to ensure file names, content, duration, and volume levels are consistent, but also orchestrate them in a way that makes it easy for the localization teams to execute the final product for each market.

## Centralized workflows

It's been common in the past for workflow management to be siloed within individual departments or brands — and to be completely disconnected from the DAM. Today, not only do DAM systems and workflow tools have APIs that facilitate integrations and handoffs, some have incorporated the two into one toolset/dashboard. This enables more automation and greater efficiency.

One of the largest tech companies in the world uses automations in their DAM to simplify approvals. A user can find an asset in the DAM and put it in a shopping cart. Then, the DAM reviews their global location, use case, and permissions, and if they fit the requirements, the asset download request is automatically approved or routed for manual review and approval to the appropriate person.

## Composability and ease of integration

Composability allows you to capitalize on the interrelationships of system components. As systems become more composable and flexible, you can use only the components you need and assemble or apply them in various combinations to satisfy specific requirements. For Third Wave DAMs, this is especially relevant for applications you don't typically consider integrating with DAM.

For example, one of our customers integrates with the warehouse management system, Tecsys. The integration shows our customer what products exist, what is available, as well as accepting shipping information, sending tracking information, and processing returns. The combination lets users order products from the DAM instead of managing two separate systems and workflows.

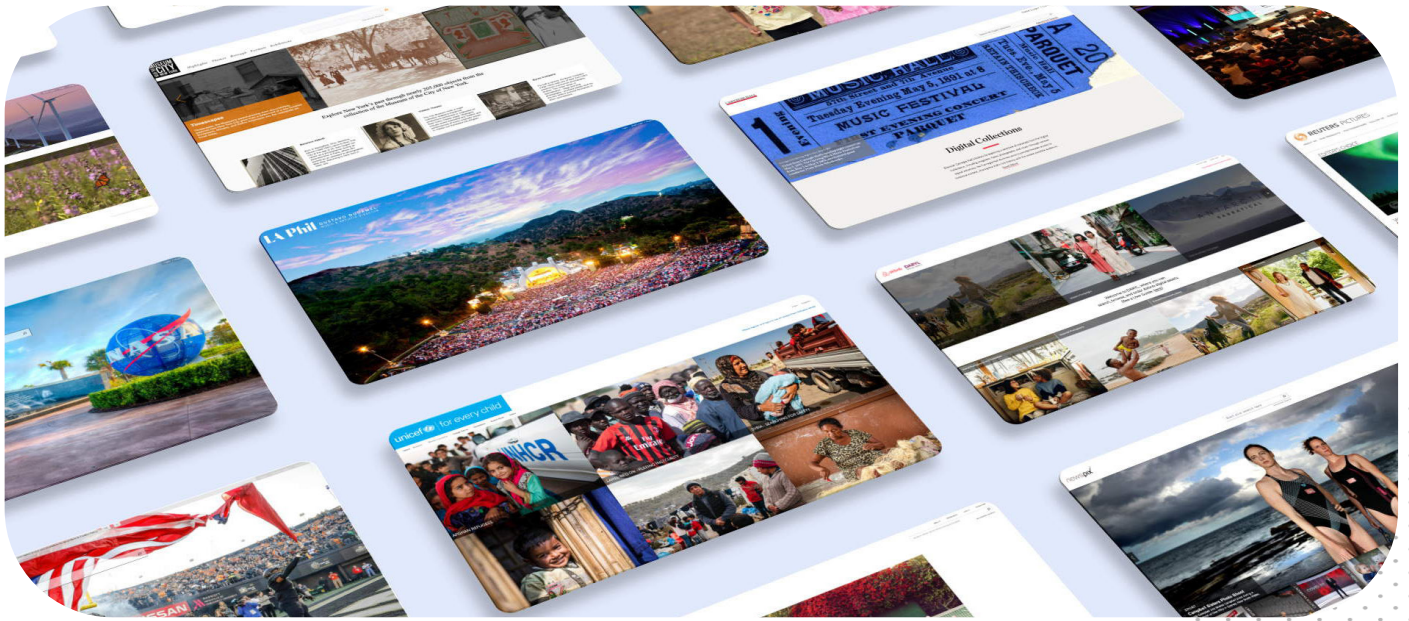
## **A.I. services**

In the DAM world, artificial intelligence is mostly about visual recognition and auto-tagging assets. But increasingly, A.I. can also be leveraged to generate asset descriptions, offer asset recommendations based on natural language prompts, and to detect and clean up duplicate assets — with additional generative A.I. applications on the horizon. This can drive efficiency and ease of content discovery.



For instance, the American Film Institute is making hundreds of thousands of video and audio assets available using A.I. By running assets through auto-captioning A.I. in the DAM, they're able to quickly identify keywords as well as important names that help Marketing, Events, and Education teams find the materials they need without manually transcribing every asset.

# Benefits of a Third Wave DAM



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### Evolving towards the Third Wave

When enterprises fail to connect systems and update outdated tech, their ability to automate sputters, their time-to-market moves at a snail's pace, and employees get frustrated with repetitive manual tasks. When downstream systems, like your Content Management System (CMS) or Digital Experience Platform (DXP), can't access digital assets or use its delivery, transformation, or other key services, DAM remains merely a Content Hub, rather than a true Content Engine.

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Organizations have the opportunity to reap many benefits by evolving towards the Third Wave of DAM, including:

- 1 Being able to compose and automate what the enterprise needs to accelerate time-to-market and reduce manual tasks
- 2 The ability to plug in or remove micro-services, thus having supreme flexibility to evolve portions or the entirety of your DAM or MarTech ecosystem
- 3 Broad availability of enriched assets to e-commerce and sales teams
- 4 The power to let less technical users do more, thanks to low-code, no-code, and web-based system integration/data configuration
- 5 Leveraging assets and data across the enterprise — with downstream systems as the primary consumers

Many First and Second Wave DAMs are siloed and monolithic, meaning Third Wave DAM benefits won't come without careful and proper planning of downstream applications. Planning allows your DAM to be configured and set up to support the best possible internal and external customer experiences.



## Next steps

Getting from a First or Second Wave of DAM to the Third isn't something that happens overnight. Based on our most advanced clients, we recommend that you:

- 1 Develop a long-view, north star tech stack strategy — include future-state system use cases with an eye towards distribution and automation.
- 2 Consider the DAM as part of your broader IT stack for the entire enterprise, beyond marketing, to assist with change management during the digital transformation process.
- 3 Look at what you have from a system and application standpoint. Does it fit your purpose? And assess your existing systems for redundancy or under-utilization.
- 4 Work with a tech stack expert to create a detailed gap analysis.
- 5 Develop a tech roadmap to bridge the gaps — this includes what microservices and integrated applications you need to accomplish your CX goals.
- 6 Go to market to fill any technology gaps.
- 7 Work with a change-management expert to determine the impact of the change.
- 8 Focus on systems that provide maximum differentiated capabilities that play into the core business processes and objectives.