

# Choosing the Right DAM in 2025

5 Steps for Selecting a Digital Asset Management Platform

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# Introduction

In the last decade, the amount of digital content that companies operate and maintain has grown exponentially. This has created a new and unique set of challenges that businesses must confront and address.

Managing and operating digital content - referred to as **Content Operations** - involves aligning different stakeholders, disparate teams, business processes, and technology stacks. Throw in the recent shift to remote working, the complexity of digital content management and operations has been further amplified.

Digital Asset Management platforms (DAMs) were born to solve these content challenges: to abstract the complexity of alignment by **providing a platform that acts as the source of truth for all digital content**. However, not all DAMs are born equal. There is an ever-expanding list of DAM solutions in this booming market, each with a nuanced offering. Navigating these various offerings is a challenge in itself, but there are some steps you can take to make this process easier and, ultimately, more successful.

This white paper aims to assist you in understanding your current challenges (in relation to your digital content and processes), **defining your DAM requirements, differentiating between offerings** and **learning best-practices for the deployment of your chosen DAM**.



# 1. Digital Asset Management and its Role

Before we discuss requirements, recommendations and features set, let's first align on the definition of a Digital Asset Management platform. Gartner provides the following definition:

*“ A Digital Asset Management platform (DAM) stores, manages and renders rich media, including text, graphics, photos, video, and audio. A DAM can be sold as a software license or hosted service.*

*Typically, DAM systems are intended to support a wide range of actors - from specialized creative to generalist production to more operational and administrative roles - both inside and outside an organization, often including agencies and channel partners.*

DAM acts as a central repository and single-source-of-truth for a company's collection of digital assets. It is integral to the entire content life-cycle including the upload, management, collaboration and successful distribution.



## Who uses DAM?

From our industry research and analysis of real-world customer use-cases, it has become clear that there are 2 main types of DAM users: **Technical** and **Non-Technical**.

The following are their characteristics:

### Technical Users



- Roles often include:
  - o Backend, Frontend, Fullstack and Web Developers
  - o Software Engineers
- Responsible for building connections with 3rd party systems that interact with DAM, such as PIM and CMS systems
- Often prefer APIs access to manage media lifecycle – referred to as 'Headless DAM'

### Non-Technical Users



- Roles often include:
  - o Content, Marketing and SEO Teams
  - o eCommerce Teams
- Collaboration on media is frequently required
- Responsible for ensuring the correct content is delivered in an SEO friendly format to customer channels
- Prefer a graphical interface to manage media

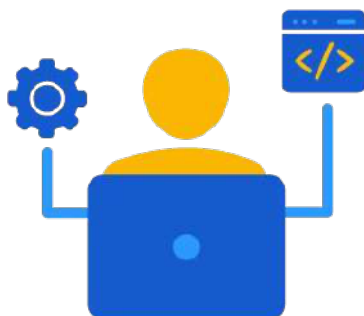


## 2 Types of DAMS: Headless vs Collaborative

Over the past decade, more challenges have emerged at various levels related to digital content management. With increasingly diverse types of content involving different tools, channels and the interaction of technical and non-technical teams through its lifecycle, Digital Asset Management has evolved to keep pace with these needs.

Today, DAMs have occupied an important place in the MarTech ecosystem in companies of all sizes and industries. There are two types of DAMs to cater to the different needs of corporations, outlined below.

### Headless DAM



- **No User Interface**, communicates and shares content with back-end applications via **APIs in a cloud network**
- **Decoupled** architecture
- Implementation **requires technical skills**
- Supports **omnichannel** and **cross-platform** content sharing
- Customizable and flexible, front-end **agnostic**
- **Easy and secure third-party integrations** with **minimal disruptions** to development
- Typically for developers and product owners

### Collaborative DAM



- Enjoy Headless DAM's features  
+
- **Asset Hub front-office** for internal users
- Customizable **Asset Hub branding**
- **Customizable** user views with **role-based access control**
- Content operations workflows (approval, expiration)
- Asset history tracking
- Restricted upload access while enabling assets sharing with external users
- Typically for marketers and designers

Both DAMs come with slightly different features but their main attributes are meant to support their target users and this whitepaper is here to guide you through which one best address the needs of your organization.

## 2. Understanding Your Challenges – The knowns and the unknowns

You are likely already conscious of the challenges of managing media assets in a multi-location organization, with multiple teams requiring media assets to accomplish their tasks.

However, it is also paramount to establish a holistic view of the challenges of your organization; not all are obvious. Companies usually face one or more of the following core set of challenges, categorized into three buckets:



### Collaboration and Management

- Navigating complex content workflows (10-30% of creative time is spent searching for assets);
- Ensuring optimal interactions with distributed and remote teams;
- Ensuring compliance with content rights and relevant privacy laws, e.g. GDPR;
- Saving time by automating daily tasks.



### Speed and Time-to-Fulfillment

- Making Digital Assets responsive to the type of customer or prospect endpoint;
- Ensuring optimum speed of delivery for Digital Assets to each customer or prospect geographic location;
- Saving time and manual effort of transforming and optimizing digital assets.



### Conversion and Digital Experience

- Improving technical SEO and driving inbound web traffic;
- Ensuring all media is correctly displayed to achieve optimal user experience and prospect conversion;
- Gaining visibility on Digital Asset performance and opportunities for improvement.

Companies choose to utilize Digital Asset Management platforms (DAMs) to abstract these technical challenges and unleash the power of visual content to be more competitive and grow market shares. DAMs help **foster collaboration, expedite Time-to-Fulfillment** and **Project Throughput - ultimately enriching customer and prospect experiences**, with optimized content reaching their endpoints faster than ever before. Before identifying needs and creating requirements lists, it is essential to commit time to truly understand the challenges your organization is facing regarding Digital Asset Management.

This should be a **multi-stakeholder initiative** and include representatives from IT, Marketing, Project Management, Digital and Creative divisions. Once you understand your challenges, you can then begin building your requirements. The next section is here to assist with that.

### 3. Assessing Your DAM Requirements

This white paper helps you easily assess your needs by analyzing the two facets of DAM requirements: non-functional and functional.

#### A) Non-Functional Requirements

These are fundamental criteria that will make the difference in digital experience between two solutions that, theoretically, offer the same feature-set and pricing.

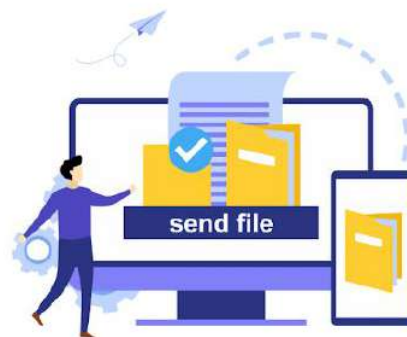


#### User Experience

DAM is part of the everyday life of teams interacting with many online assets, and can contribute, or prevent, the efficiency of global processes. Positive Digital experience is one of the decisive elements that drive a DAM system's end-user adoption, which will eventually boost the efficiency and productivity of various teams. **Choosing the right DAM is selecting the platform your Team will adopt without friction.**

#### Performance

Digital Asset Management solutions usually deal with heavy and simultaneous loads worldwide. Among all DAM systems, we advise opting for Cloud-based, distributed and dynamically scalable systems that are most likely to ensure performance. **Your DAM system should handle the volumes of assets you intend to process, instantly.**



#### Security & Compliance

By choosing a DAM vendor, make sure it offers out-of-the-box compliance with the security standards included in your internal policies, security and scalability needs. More than purchasing a solution, **pick the team who will best listen to your use cases and requirements to provide you with tailored answers** (support availability, professional services, SLAs, language support, migration support, etc.)





## B) Functional Requirements

Generally speaking, DAM functional requirements are either technical or business-related, depending on the Business Unit involved.

**IT team's** requirements primarily emphasize the integration facilities and the scalability of the infrastructure while keeping good performance. Their main goal: efficiency and cost savings. Meanwhile, **Marketing and Product teams** focus more on accelerating Time to Fulfilment and guarantee the quality of digital assets. Their main goal: performance and increased revenue. Finally, the **Content and Design teams'** expectations in DAM are focused on streamlining the creative process while retrieving, editing, and approving files. Their main goal: productivity.

Functional requirements can be split into three levels based on [Gartner's publication](#) on DAM use cases:



The basic level typically relates to **small businesses** with relatively straightforward internal processes and low volumes of assets. The intermediate level involves **mid-sized businesses** with media assets being a central part of them; they often deal with lots of media assets and have more than 10 people interacting with them daily. The advanced level concerns **corporates and high volume platforms**, dealing with millions of visuals that are critical to the business activity. Their project is wide enough to get several third parties involved, which can create complexity in project management.

After defining the DAM non-functional requirements critical to your business, we suggest that you **complete a personalized worksheet** to help **refine your DAM functionalities** based on your unique use cases: [DAM Assessment Form](#).

## 4. Digital Asset Management Features

Once you've answered the list of questions above, you are now ready to choose the right DAM to solve your business challenges and optimize your workflows. This section divides DAM features into two categories: **core features** and **advanced features**.

### Core Features:

First, make sure your DAM solution checks the **5 DAM Core Features**. In most cases, the features below are key to successfully implementing a DAM within your teams and organization.

Second, as mentioned earlier, your DAM journey does not stop at the basic features; it is meant to solve further issues around **internal and external collaborations**, **unique integrations**, **asset monitoring** and **performance**.



#### 1. Upload Facility

Import one or several assets (images, audio, docs and video) manually via an uploader widget, an admin Console, or programmatically via API to centralize your Assets in one central hub.



#### 2. File Management

Organize assets by Project, Folder and a set of metadata including automatic tags to improve the search experience and avoid duplicates.



#### 3. Media Transformation

Create new versions (crop, watermark, resize, etc.) of your images with a dedicated Editor widget or by using a dynamic URL transformation. Transcode video to enable adaptive streaming on your web applications.



#### 4. DAM Platform Management

Set up User-Role-based permissions to restrict the Projects' Library and Dashboard access to specific individuals.

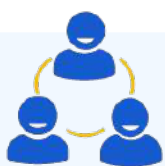


#### 5. Adaptive Media Compression

On-the-fly media optimization, compression, and CDN (Content Delivery Network) distribution provide fast and responsive media to all devices worldwide.

## Enhanced Features:

This is where the **6 DAM enhanced features**, including Intermediate and Advanced ones, come into place.



### 1. Team Collaboration

Increase your teamwork efficiency by applying your internal approval workflow into your DAM, following validation steps and adding specific annotations on the content of each asset.

#### Use Case:

Your Design Agency shares visuals of the new products' collection with your organization's Marketing Team. Once the Design Agency uploads the new packshot, it might need some edits before going live on the various channels. Your Marketing team will be notified and can comment or make annotations for each image in the DAM to avoid losing information through email. The image is then ready for approval by your Product Manager, to be optimized on-the-fly and finally published on several channels.



### 2. Assets Sharing with External Users

Streamline the collaboration process with external users. Share assets from your DAM with third parties or enable these third parties to upload files into specific folders.

#### Use Case:

Your Marketplace federates hundreds of vendors all around the world, distributing millions of products over the platform. In order to structure such an extensive catalog, your Product Team needs to gather all the product images in one place. Your Vendors can easily upload their latest content into a folder dedicated to their brand through a simple drag-and-drop platform. For enhanced security, this external uploader can be limited by time or restricted by a password.



### 3. Workflow Integrations

Save time by automating tasks into the DAM based on artificial intelligence algorithms and rules, e.g. watermark recognition and background removal.

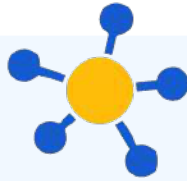
#### Use Case:

Your Online Newspaper gathers thousands of visuals per month that originates from various sources (Reporters, official Photographers, free stocks, Readers, etc.). Workflow integrations can help unify and harmonize these visuals by flagging too large pictures and automatically resizing them, warning if the photograph is of low quality, detecting faces to automate the cropping, or alerting about copyrights expiration.



### 4. Data Security

Ensure that your DAM is compliant with your internal data processing policy. DAM platforms can replicate your data among several data centers and providers to limit the risk of loss.



### 5. Multi-tenancy

Gain efficiency while working on several projects by using a single multi-tenant DAM solution.



### 6. Real-User Monitoring

Gain performance with this powerful feature and give insights into each production asset perceived on the user end. Real User Monitoring allows you to detect issues quickly and avoid impacting UX and conversions.

#### Use Case:

Your Digital Agency provides web hosting, development, design and marketing for several projects. From Tech to Design teams, you might need to onboard hundreds of Users into the DAM to collaborate on each project while keeping them hermetic to one another. Multi-tenancy is the key: you can create new projects and onboard the right collaborators from your agency's and client's team from your Digital Agency account.

#### Use Case:

Should your organization follow a strong security policy, e.g. GDPR for EU companies, you will need to reflect these set of rules into your DAM. Since the EU-US Privacy Shield is no longer active, your DPO will ensure that all personal data processed by the DAM does not go outside the EU, which can be secured by relying on local storage providers. Besides, you might require higher security levels when it comes to accessibility (SSO, MFA), data protection (cloud storage replication, password-protected sharing), or production assets (domain whitelisting, URL signature, URL aliases).

#### Use Case:

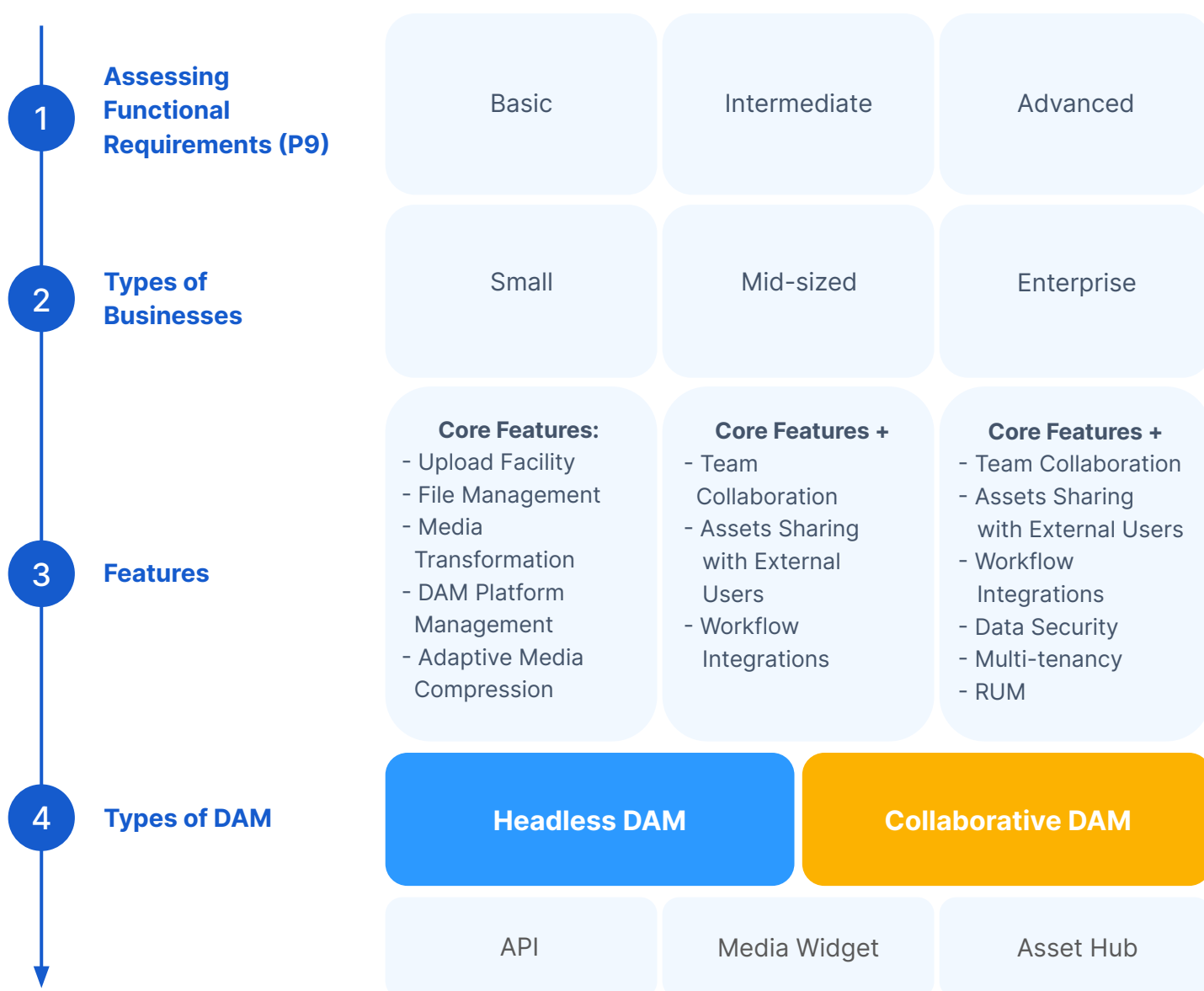
Your Chief Performance Officer (CPO) knows that digital assets have a heavy impact on the whole project's performance, e.g. images represent on average 70% of a page loading time. DAM solutions can provide valuable insights related to the display of assets on production, worldwide. Your CPO gathers these DAM inputs to understand the traffic origin (browsers, devices, locations), control the quality of what is actually delivered to the end user (TTFB, FCP, FMP) and get alerted if loading times are slow or if errors happen.

## 5. Your DAM Journey

### Your company is special, so must be your DAM

As every organization has unique use cases, it is essential to assess your company's requirements, account for the type of business, figure out what features you'll need in your DAM and the level of control.

We've summarized what we've covered in the 4 steps in this table so that you can find a reliable and secure DAM solution that will fit into your company's environment.





## Ensuring a successful DAM

Keeping digital assets organized and accessible for the right team members is key to thriving in a newly established digital landscape.

Here are the 3 steps of your DAM journey you should consider to ensure the long term success of your DAM:



### 1. Creating an implementation roadmap

Create a roadmap that solves your current needs that are not included in the solution right now. **Your DAM roadmap should be aligned with your organization's overall content strategy.** You can use the [DAM Assessment Form](#) on a regular basis to observe how your needs evolve over time.

DAM adoption requires careful planning, an internal champion and pre-defined use cases to start. KPIs are required to measure adoption success. Your roadmap can include adapting steps for your entire team with a clear deadline when the whole solution needs to be fully implemented.

### 2. Creating a content operations ecosystem

The content operations ecosystem requires the implementation of detailed guidelines when it comes to marketing work and assets Management.

After defining a life-cycle for a piece of content that comes into touch with your brand, the next step is to train your team. Make sure to give your team a clear understanding of where and how they can access the desired brand assets and how they can upload their own. Establish user access based on the specific user profile within your team, and give your DAM administrator an outlined role.



### 3. Determining the Return On Investment (ROI)

Establishing the ROI criteria of a successful DAM deployment gives you an essential framework for strategic planning and validation for a DAM purchase. A possible ROI measurement would be the revenue increase achieved through the enhancement of employee productivity and efficiency through DAM and new revenue streams.

Also, remember to include a list of things related to cost reduction, such as the time spent by your tech/design teams on editing and searching assets, the bandwidth saved by your optimized production assets, or the cloud storage costs while creating fewer duplicates, etc.



The outcome of your DAM journey heavily depends on the provider you choose. For all 3 steps you will need immense support from their implementation team.

# Accelerate your Content Operations. Deliver fast and beautiful Digital Experiences.

Looking at the accelerated shift to digital, our team observed a real tendency to unleash both remote and real-time collaboration around content operations. This comes with a growing density of visual assets that tend to be extensive, rich and omnichannel.

As digital experiences become more mature, they also become more complex and often rely on multiple platforms (CMS, hosting, payment, logistics, analytics etc.).

Scaleflex' vision is the following: to keep pace and adapt to these fast-moving times. The DAM you choose has to be **as agnostic as possible**, to **avoid any friction** whilst integrating with your organization's platforms.

At Scaleflex, **Scalability** and **Flexibility** are part of our DNA.

Learn more about the [Scaleflex Digital Asset Management Platform](#)

## About Scaleflex

Scaleflex is a global leading B2B SaaS company developing the most powerful and scalable Digital Asset Management and Media Acceleration solutions. Our mission is to load, store, organize, optimize, publish and accelerate all media assets (images, videos, static files such as JS and CSS files, etc.) for websites or mobile applications.

With more than 2 billion brand assets per month under management, Scaleflex helps over 1000 organizations, including Michelin, St Gobain, Toom, Printemps, WhiteStuff, SeLogger, Knight Frank, Sotheby's Realty and various SaaS companies to provide more engaging, personalized experiences for their customers around the world.

For more information, visit [scaleflex.com](https://scaleflex.com).

## Glossary

**Digital Assets** – images, videos, PDFs, CSS, JS, and other media used on websites, mobile apps, or any other type of digital content produced by a company.

**Digital Asset Management** – the end-to-end process of managing Digital Assets; from uploads to edits and optimization. This management stretches across various teams and departments at the varying stages of a Digital Asset lifecycle.

**Digital Asset Management Platform (DAM)** – a software platform, typically SaaS-based, specifically designed to tackle each aspect of Digital Asset Management, at every stage of a Digital Assets lifecycle.

**Project Throughput** – efficiency of the project calculated as the number of work items completed per a specific unit of time (e.g. days or weeks).

**Time-to-Fulfillment** – the measure of productivity calculated as the time taken for marketing content to reach its destination audience/channel.

**Work-in-Process** – a Digital Asset that is still in the creative process.