Reducing Marketing and Compliance Risks for Food & Beverage Companies

Marketing Operations Software streamlines the creative process, puts clarity around project management and provides a central location for brand and marketing assets for distribution.

Introduction

In 2018 a 15-year-old girl died in the UK from eating a Pret a Manger baguette, which failed to list sesame seeds on the label. The company had 9 complaints in total from people who experienced anaphylaxis as a result of consuming these baguettes and took over a year to update their labelling. Where people's lives are at stake, mistakes and slow reaction times such as Pret a Manger's are not acceptable and pose a serious risk not only to the business but to people's health.
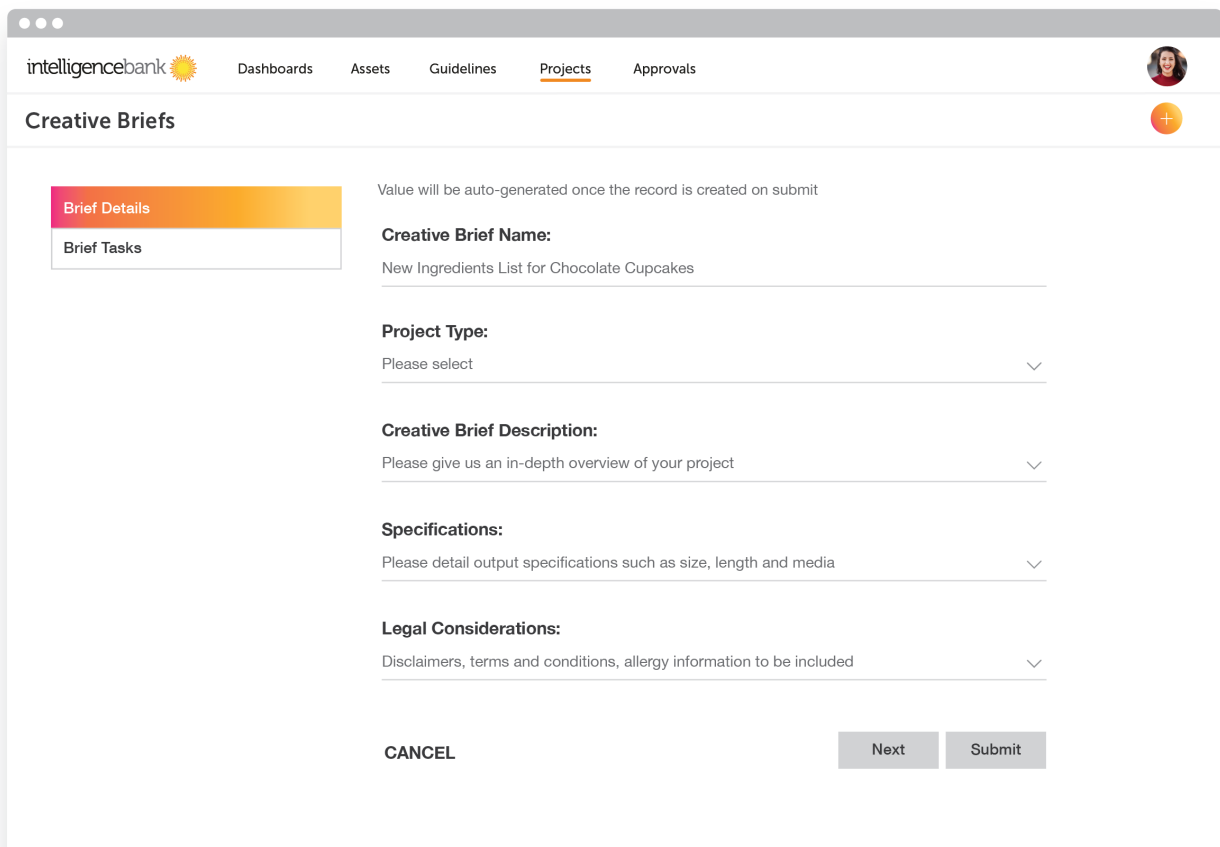
In America, Australia and across Europe, there are strict laws and guidelines governing how ingredients and health claims must be communicated. These range from listing the ingredients included in food, to warnings about trace elements of ingredients which are known to cause allergic reactions, country of origin and the proper use of terms such as 'sugar free', 'fat free' and 'healthy'. There is an expectation from consumers that manufacturers adhere to these laws and false advertising or mistakes on packaging bring with them significant risks, not only to consumers, but to all stakeholders in the supply chain.

The likelihood of these risks skyrockets with incomplete systems for creative production and distribution, with substantial room for error along geographically dispersed production lines. Technology closes this loop by placing processes and controls around developing, reviewing, updating and distributing marketing material and labelling content. It ensures that creative compliance starts from the beginning and moves through the correct approval processes. Effective project management capabilities and enterprise digital management within the one platform also increases visibility for all stakeholders. By implementing processes around production of marketing material you can ensure that the products walking out the door are ready for the world to consume. Read on to hear how Marketing Operations Software can reduce risk to your business and streamline your creative processes.

Creative Production

Distributing creative which has obvious errors, misleading information or is offensive can attract negative PR or get you sued, but where products for human consumption are involved, incorrect labelling can result in serious injury or death. Aside from the obvious legal ramifications that come from overlooked errors such as this, re-works and roadblocks during the creative process can severely impact business, disrupting production lines and potentially lead to missed order deadlines. Implementing marketing operations and compliance software to manage the process of creative production is a vital component of streamlining production and meeting delivery requirements.

Errors are less likely to occur when creative compliance starts from the beginning. Having dynamic creative briefs ensures that important information is supplied to designers before they begin. These may be as simple as the dimensions and copy, or you may wish to look up disclaimers, nutritional diagrams or ingredients lists from databases. Everything can be pulled into your creative briefs from your digital asset management system, including attaching images, labels, logos and examples of previous designs.

In saying this, creative design is only one of the many tasks required to successfully complete a project or launch a campaign. Projects and their related tasks (including design) should be managed from within the one platform to increase efficiencies. Due dates, collaborators, status and other key information can be added and viewed in calendars or on Kanban boards. By operating in this way you can work to milestones, manage workloads and isolate bottlenecks. It provides visibility into when designers are overloaded, creative is stuck in the approval process and when designs have been sent to the factory for production to meet a specific delivery date.
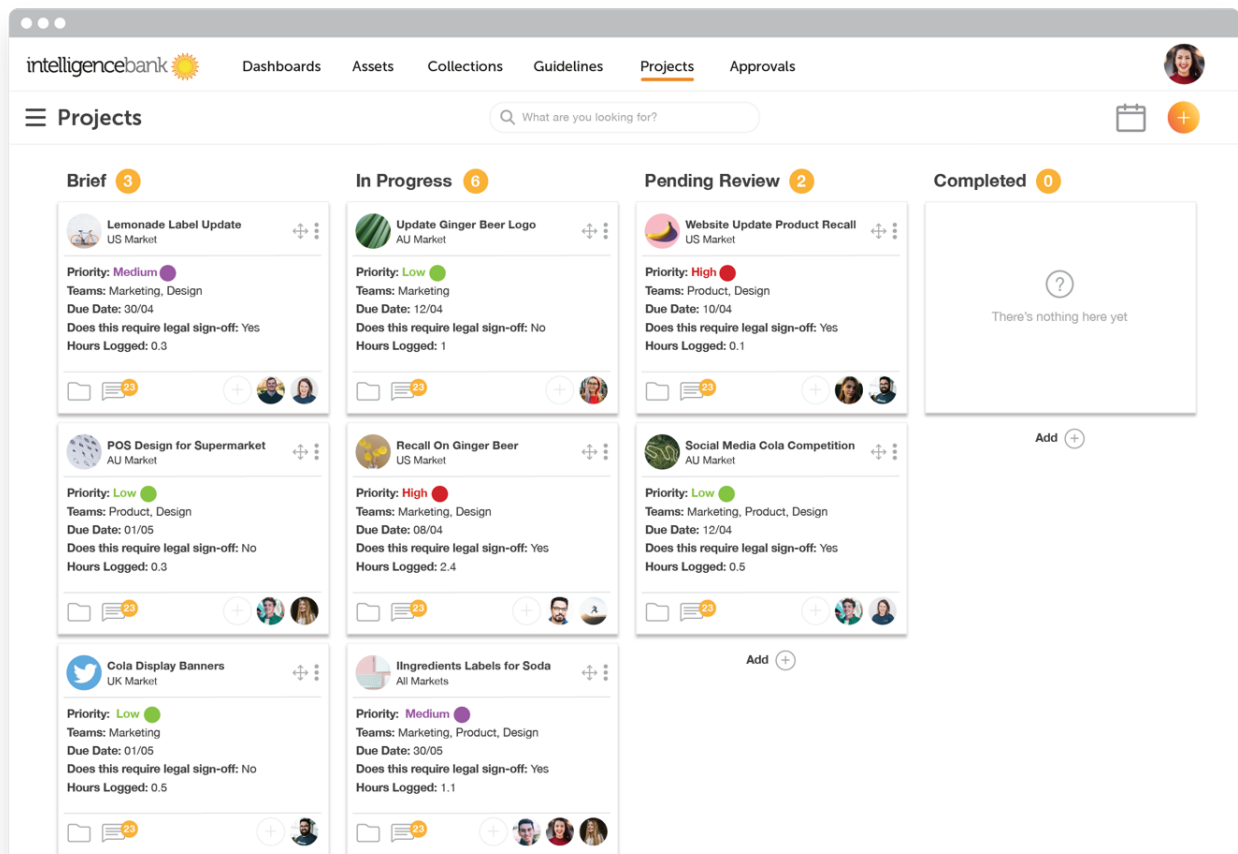

These capabilities are great when you are working across multiple teams, factories or distributors in a range of locations. Most global marketing teams today are working with overseas factories for global distribution. Prior to Marketing Operations software, it was difficult to confirm if the factory was using the correct and approved label, when printing would be completed by and if it would be delivered to the distributor in time. Factories often managed their own relationships with agencies to make labelling changes, most of the time without oversight of the marketing team. Not only does this create a major risk in case of incorrect labelling and potential recalls, it also gives the marketing team very little visibility over the look and feel of the final product.

Managing Your Digital Assets

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Having a central location to store, access and distribute all approved digital assets is a key step in managing risks associated with public facing content. A robust Digital Asset Management system empowers your team by ensuring that signed off creative, marketing material, product labels, signage and point of sale designs can be stored and easily found within the one platform. Supporting all file types, your Digital Asset Management system is the single source of truth for creative content and enables approved third party users to download files in the formats they need.

Keyword tagging and filters allow you to easily search beyond standard naming conventions. These searches are customizable and can be tailored around ingredients, products, locations, review dates, factories and brands, as well as file types and metadata.
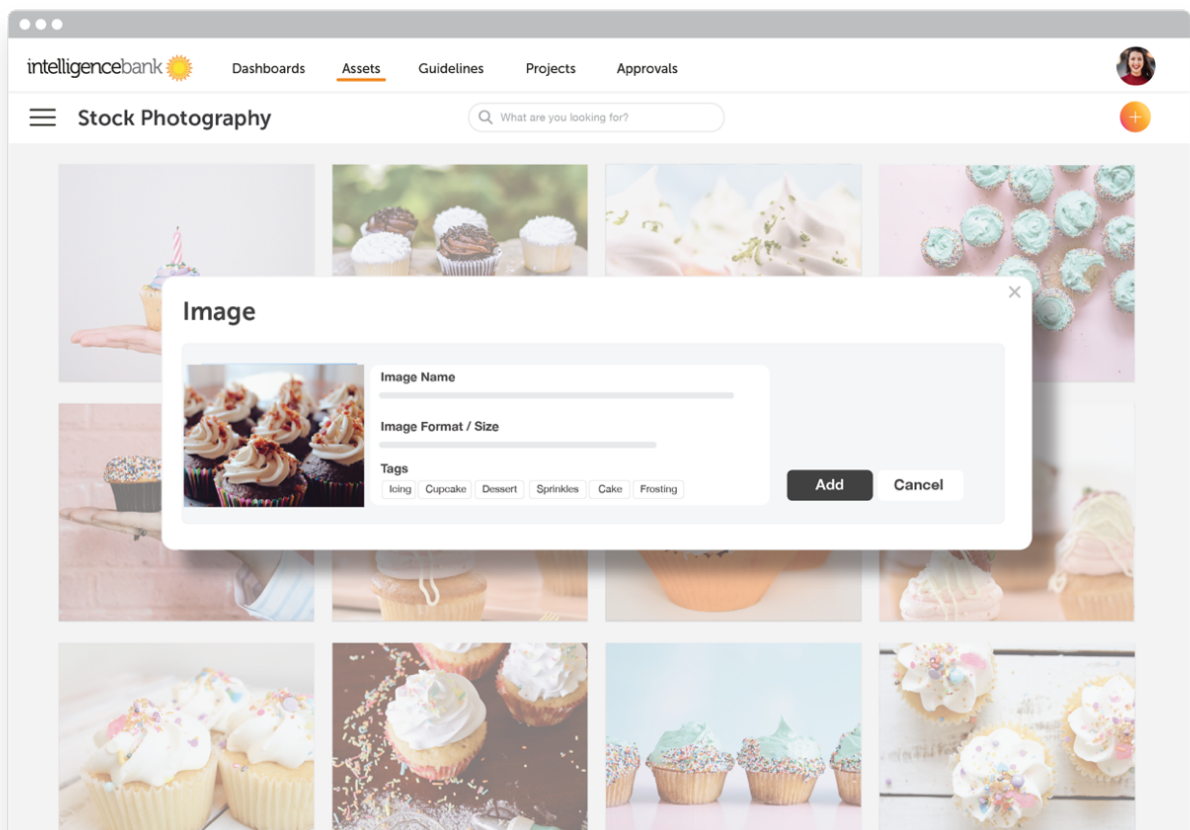

Ensuring the correct creative is used by the right people is also made easy. Version control ensures that outdated labels are immediately removed from distribution and only the latest creative is used. In cases where a product does need to be recalled the label which was distributed is easily obtained. Permissions, approvals and tracking can also be placed around content upload and download, allowing you to better manage what is being made available to your marketing team, agencies, your supply chain and other third parties and what they are distributing.

Updates to Legislation

With current legal framework being constantly reviewed and updated, companies must be proactive to ensure they are not exposed to litigation risks from existing marketing and labelling. For example, this year the FDA is set to review its issued guidance clarifying when a product is 'healthy' and the requirements that must be met to use this word on advertising and packaging. Changes such as these will have widespread effects for producers of food and beverages who use this word.

Marketing Operations Software can reduce exposure to this kind of risk in two ways.
The first is by ensuring that a process exists for regular review and reassessment of existing content. When all assets are stored within a digital asset management system, review and expiry dates can be added. These can restrict expired creative from being downloaded, remove it from any publicly shared locations and alert the relevant teams to review and update as needed.
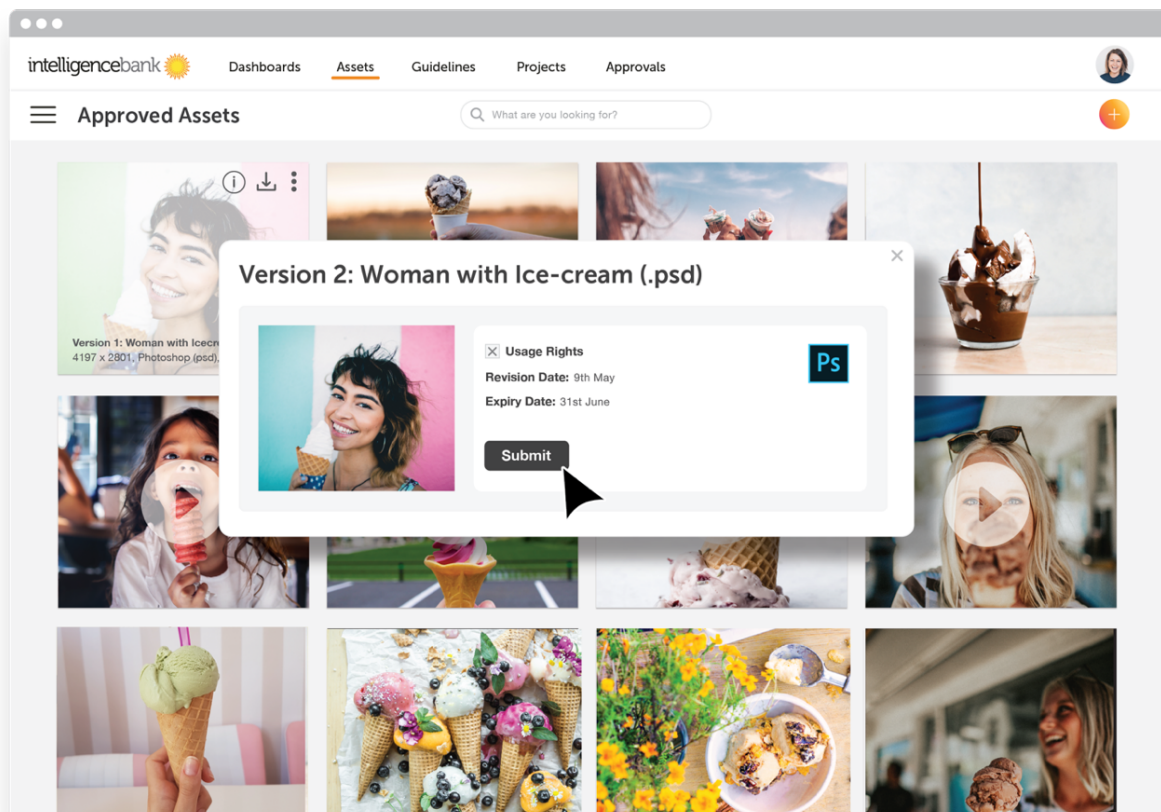

The second is ensuring that an open line of communication exists between research and development, regulatory, marketing and legal teams. Custom forms provide a 'front door' to marketing and can be used to directly inform the marketing team of updates in legislation and changes in ingredients, which products will be affected and provide a deadline for new creative production and distribution. Automating content reviews from within the platform and using it to brief in any changes and updates are also vital in creating an audit trail of accountability and provide insight into the lifecycle of creative.
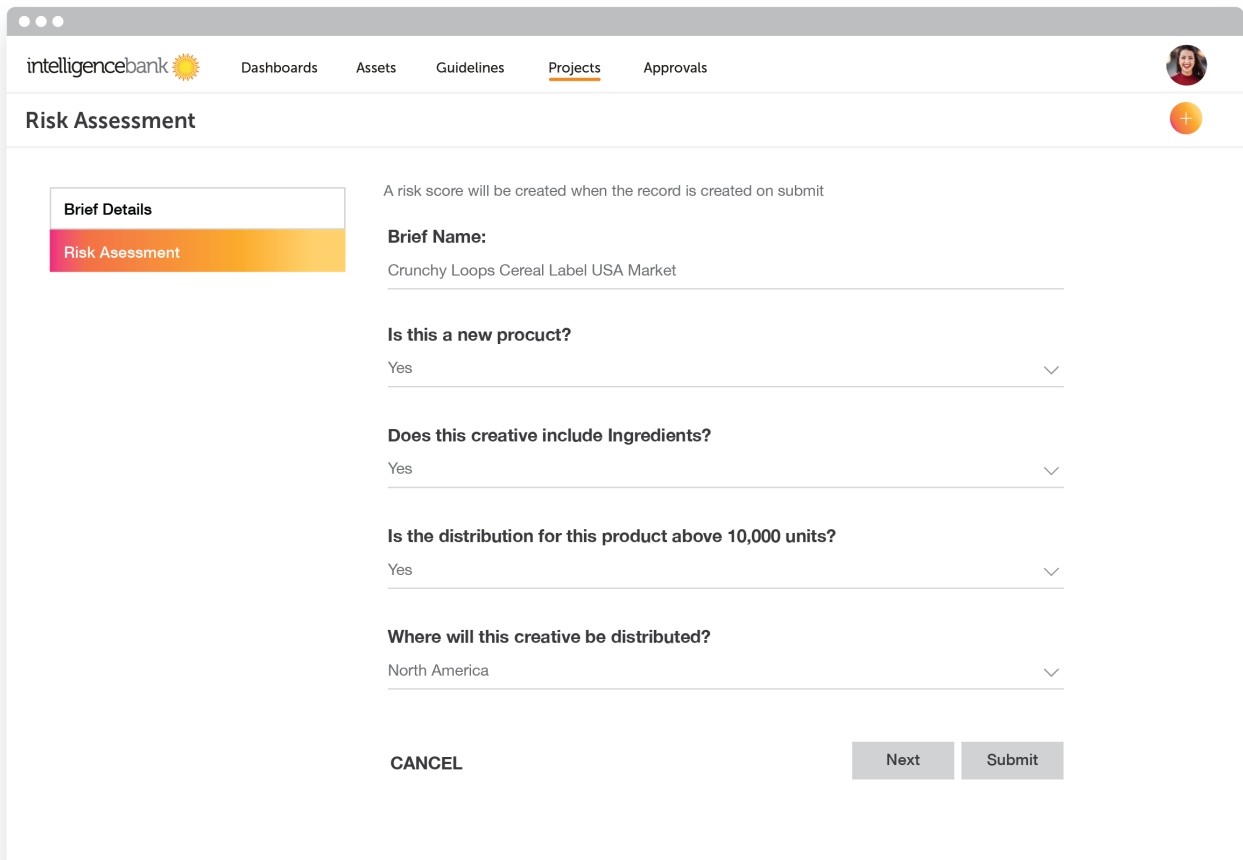
Risk Management

When incorrect creative is produced, it's usually as a result of a poor approval process with no system for distribution. For example, a factory may use an old version of a label, or marketing didn't consult the legal team before sending the design to print. Marketing Operations Software allows you to build out your processes as workflows which automatically trigger approval requests. These can be simple and placed on asset downloads or more complex, triggered by the completion of a series of tasks.

But when teams are busy and legal is overloaded with requests, how do you decide who needs to approve what and which projects pose the greatest risk? Risk scoring can be used to flag projects which present a risk to the company's bottom line and it's reputation. A packaging label, detailing the ingredients and nutritional information would need to go through a more stringent approval process in comparison to generic packaging artwork. Or, where there are tight deadlines to meet the requirements of distributors, the risk to a project may be elevated.
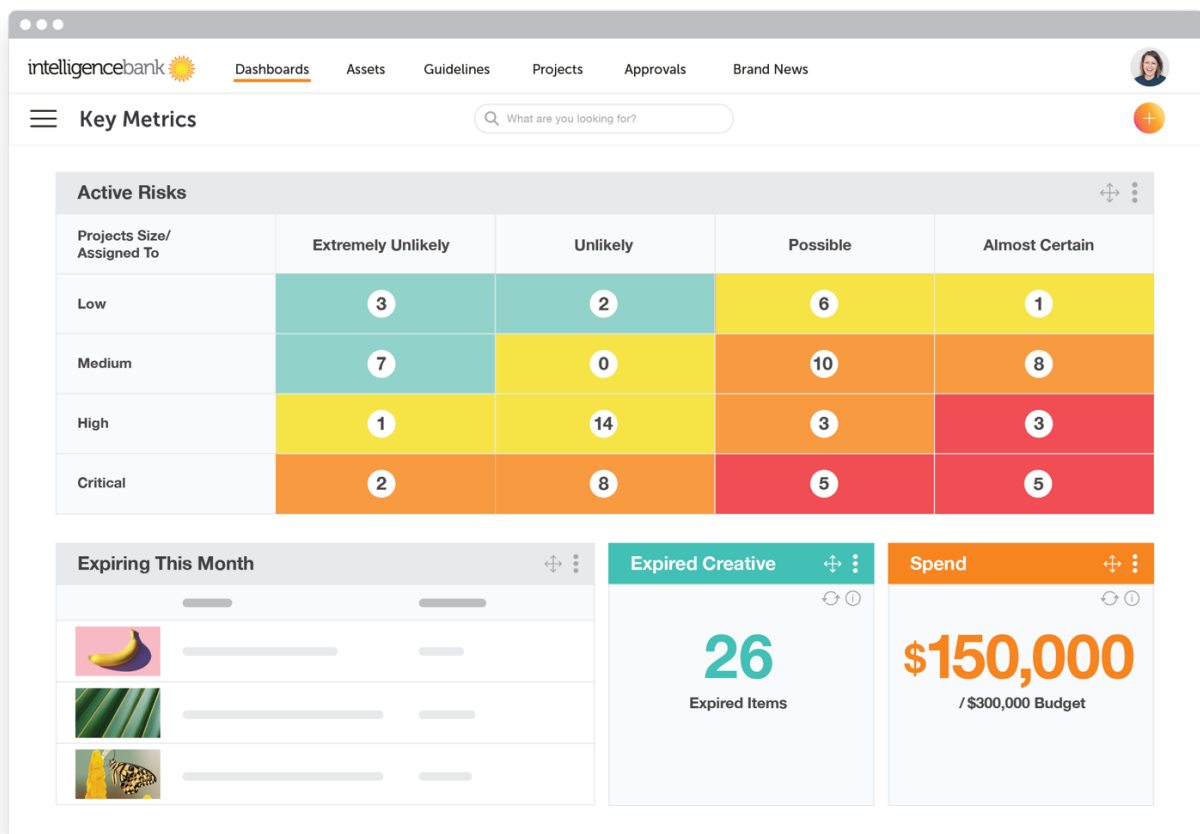
Another way to reduce exposure to problems along the supply chain is to complete a risk self-assessment. This provides an added layer of security and is essential in managing resources and the relationship between marketing and other teams. A risk assessment may look at the size and the type of project, include a checklist for important information that cannot be forgotten, or give insight as to whether creative needs to be signed off by other teams. It empowers your marketing team to make decisions early in the creative process and plan for longer approval times when legal and product need to be involved.

Supply Chains Around the World

One of the biggest challenges for producers of food and beverage is globalisation. Where once food was produced and consumed locally, it may be grown, produced, packaged and consumed across multiple countries at a time, all with different laws and requirements for their marketing and packaging. This geographical disparity makes local area marketing difficult to manage and get right - especially when teams other than marketing are accessing and distributing creative material.

In 2015 Target Australia were forced to recall chocolate Easter bunnies from their shelves because they didn't comply with Australian food regulations. Instead of being labelled 'may contain tree nuts and peanuts', the chocolates which were made in Germany were labelled 'may contain shell fruit'. Examples such as this highlight the need for a system to manage local area marketing and creative approvals.

Creative templates are a great way to give users outside of the core marketing team freedom to update creative, without compromising legal and brand parameters. Templates are pre-designed and certain areas are made available to edit from within the Marketing Operations platform. Where sensitive information needs updating, you can choose from a database of options and add additional approval workflows.
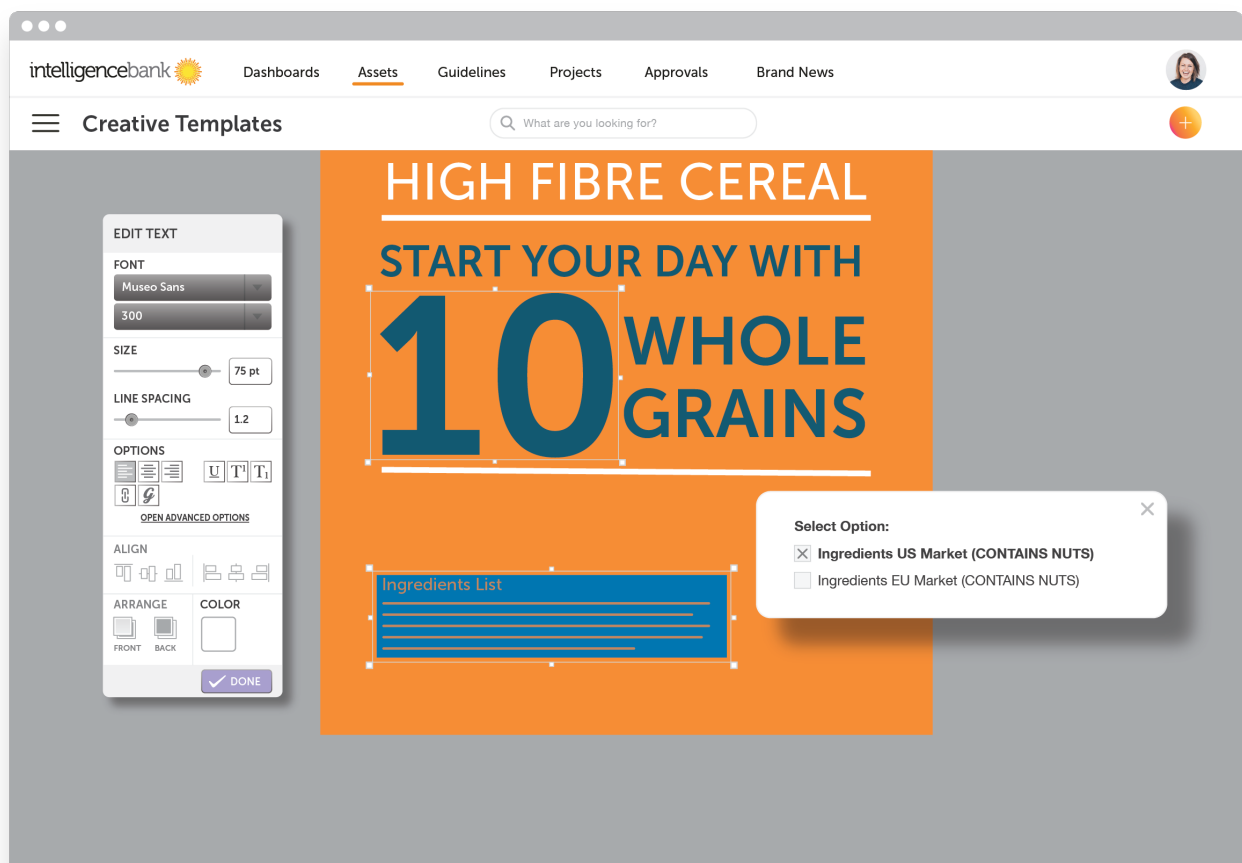
For example, if you were a global producer of healthy cereals, ingredients included in your product may vary from country to country because of consumer tastes or cost. You would therefore need to ensure that the correct ingredients list is attached to the creative for your chosen market. As with all assets, approvals can then be placed on creative prior to being downloaded or sent to the factory for production.

In simplifying the way that creative is developed and updated, 'down time' in production is reduced. Where previously the factory had to wait for extended periods of time for designers and marketing approval and distribution, it's now a simple process with little room for error. Orders with small windows of opportunity can be delivered without mistakes, in a timely manner.

Wrapping Up

When food mislabelling occurs on a production line it poses significant risk to the consumer, along with compromising product integrity, brand reputation and company profits.

Marketing Operations Software helps in the following ways:

- Brings all of your marketing processes into the one platform
- Provides a trackable way to manage creative production and distribution, cutting down on costs associated with other software and agencies
- Provides a central location for approved creative which can be easily searched, updated and distributed directly from within the platform
- Streamlines your supply chain and brings internal teams and third parties together
- Ensures your suppliers and factories comply with your own and legal requirements
- Reduces risk of a marketing or labelling mistake
- Allows you to quickly find ingredient labels used at any given point in time
- Ensures you don't miss client deadlines

About IntelligenceBank

IntelligenceBank is the leading Marketing Operations Software provider, helping content marketers seamlessly manage brand governance, digital assets, creative content approvals and compliance, and creative project management. IntelligenceBank's beautifuly designed platform is used by leading brands globally.

If you would like to know more about how Marketing Operations Software can protect your business against a marketing compliance breach, our friendly experts are just an email or phone call away.

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