DAM Software Comparison Guide

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What is Digital Asset Management (DAM)?

Digital Asset Management (DAM) software is a business process management solution that provides you with a centralized online hub to create, manage, share, track and find digital assets, to manage the creative process.

A DAM streamlines the management of all files including; documents, video, audio, design files and presentations. Seamless integration of your DAM with your other systems ensures it's not an island – but rather, the single source of cohesion for your marketing stack. A DAM platform saves marketing departments time and money while removing risk and internal bottlenecks.

Manage Brand Compliance

Control and track usage of assets so your team is one click away from using approved brand assets and content.

Share Digital Assets Seamlessly

Enable your team to self serve content, and share content externally with email links and public portals.

Find Content Faster Than Ever

Search with advanced queries, filtering & AI tagged metadata and facial recognition.

Distribute Content Quickly

Transform, crop and resize images and video on the fly and embed links directly from your DAM.

ROI Tracking and Reporting

Determine which assets are driving engagement and manage usage rights.

Go With The Flow

Workflows let you streamline content requests and approve final creative.

What type of DAM is best for your business?

Digital Asset Management (DAM) software is a business process management solution that provides you with a centralized online hub to create, manage, share, track and find digital assets, to manage the creative process.

Know your DAM software

DAM software can come in many shapes and sizes. When you are looking for a DAM solution, it's important to note the different types of DAM systems out there. Generally, DAM software can be categorized as follows:

1. Media Library DAMs

2. DAM for Marketing Operations

3. Archival DAMs
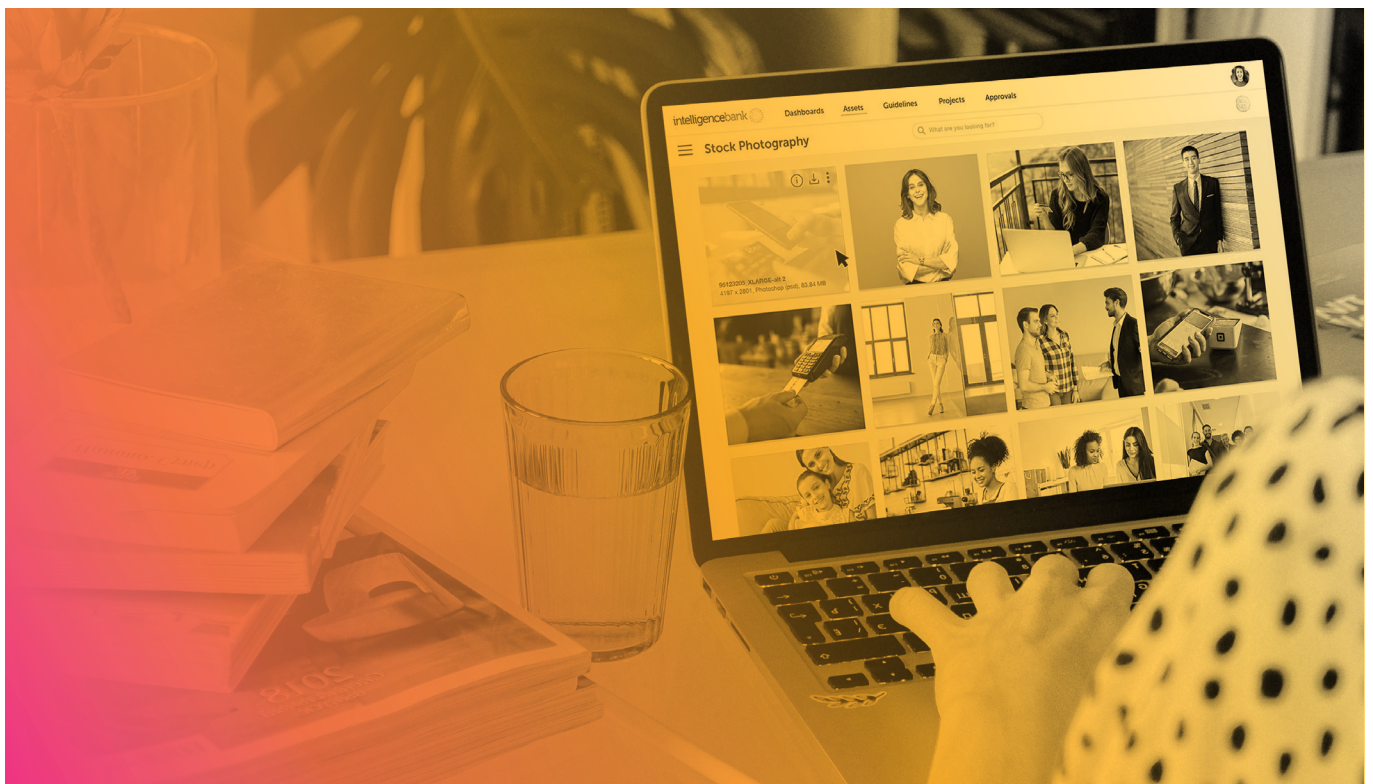
What type of DAM is best for your business?

Media Library DAMs

Media Library DAMs are designed to simplify the process of managing and distributing creative files such as images, audio, video, Microsoft Office, Adobe CC and PDFs. They generally appeal to small teams and larger enterprises, where the driving requirement is to centralize files, categorize them according to the business and make them easy to both share and track. Core functionality of a DAM includes:

• Upload files one at a time or in bulk

• Embed metadata

• Assign metadata and categorize files

• Search with advanced queries and filtering

• Create lightbox collections

• Email links to registered and non-registered users

• Share and embed files into third-party applications (for example, your CRM, CMS and AdobeCreative Cloud)

• Set review dates as to when a file needs to be retired or expired

• Manage talent-use rights with alerts

What type of DAM is best for your business?

DAM for Marketing Operations

DAMs used for marketing operations take processes to a whole new level. Marketing professionals who opt for this type of DAM are generally looking for efficient solutions for managing their digital content processes.

As well as media library functionality, a Marketing Operations DAM allows you to:

• Manage creative workflows

• Approve creative before it is downloaded

• Download, transform, crop, resize and manipulate files on the fly

• Collaborate creatively via version control, comments and markups

• Manage creative projects, including submitting creative briefs online and tracking the status of marketing projects, including budgets and designer workload

• Manage tasks against a project, including the reporting on stages and completion rates

• Manage alerts and reminders

• Editable dynamic creative templates

• Access plugins for third-party marketing apps and web CMS

• Publish digital brand guidelines for easy updating and access (compared to a static PDF)

Archival DAMs

Archival DAMs are specifically designed for museums and other cultural organizations in order to retain historical records – so they're ideal for heritage collections. Archival DAMs are suited for organizations with millions of files and are therefore usually hosted on-premise.

Some archival DAMs have storefront capabilities to sell collections to the public or to invited users.

On-premise or cloud hosting?

Before you start looking at DAM vendors, you need to know which hosting model will best suit your organization.

DAM vendors (Media Library, Marketing Operations and Archival) offer the following options for hosting your files:

• **Cloud hosting** via a Software as a Service (SaaS) application

• **On-premise** via DAM software downloaded onto your servers

• **Hybrid** self-hosted and cloud accessible

All options have pros and cons and choosing the right solution for your business is mostly based on your specific use case. Cost can also be a significant factor in deciding on the right option for you.

Cloud-based DAMs

Cloud-based, Software as a Service (SaaS) DAM applications do not require the physical installation of software onto your servers. Choosing a cloud-based option means there's no need to:

• Purchase or manage hardware

• Invest in DAM management infrastructure and backups

• Dedicate IT resources to manage security patches and backups

• Wait months for implementation

• Wait for upgrades

On-premise or cloud hosting?

With a cloud-based SaaS solution, you won't own the DAM software you use. Instead, you'll pay for a monthly or yearly license and usually get free upgrades as you use the service. The software vendor is responsible for all hosting and hardware management, and for all upgrades and maintenance.

Cloud-based DAMs are best for companies wanting to:

1. Save on IT resources

2. Have instant feature upgrades

3. Easily collaborate with external partners

4. Access the system 24/7 from any location

5. Streamline workflow, online brand guidelines and local area marketing compliance

In addition, some DAM providers also offer Platform as a Service (PaaS), whereby the cloud platform integrates creative assets from multiple servers. For example, some clients upload assets to IntelligenceBank DAM, and within the platform, via a live feed, we index creative files shared on other applications.

On-premise or cloud hosting?

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On-premise DAM solutions

On-premise DAM solutions involve installing software onto your servers. These solutions will generally involve the purchasing and management of on-premise hardware, investing in new infrastructure to manage backups and other processes. IT resources will also be needed to manage security and other updates. Installation can also take time to complete – often months.

On-premise DAM solutions are best for companies:

1. Wanting to avoid reliance on internet connectivity

2. Requiring full control of the installed version, including running updates and maintenance processes

3. Working with sensitive or regulated data that must be hosted on-premise

4. Managing extremely large files or needing extensive data storage

In some cases, the costs of storing large files or large volumes of data can make an on-premise option more cost-effective than cloud storage, even when the costs of servers and IT staff are taken into consideration.

Hybrid DAM solutions

For companies who value flexibility, hybrid models are available. In these cases, DAM platforms are stored on-premise, and can also be accessed via a cloud version.
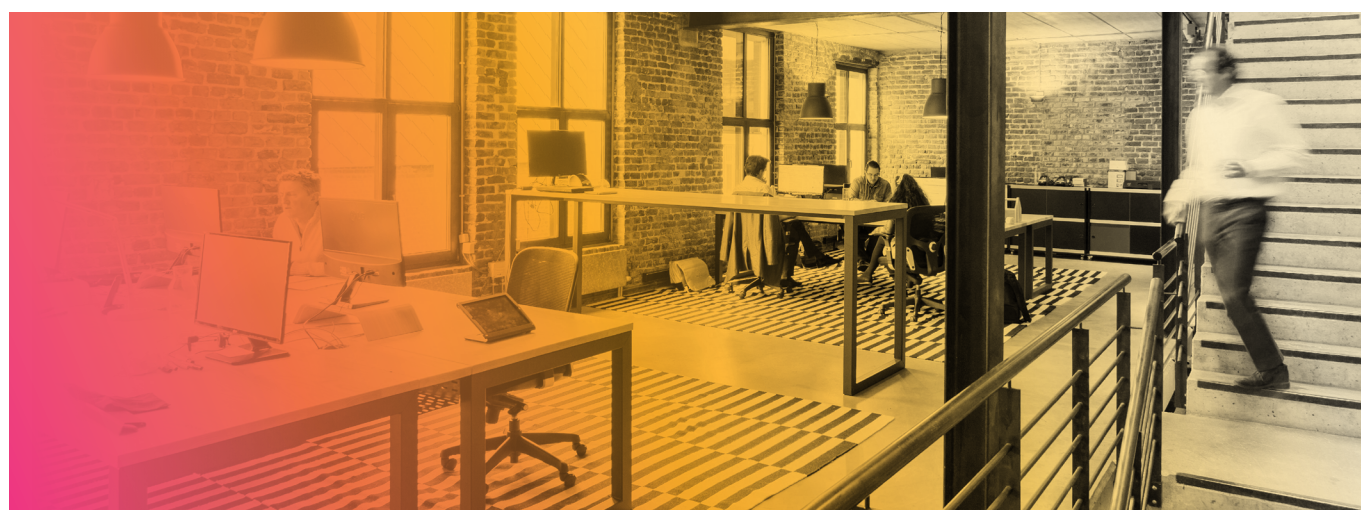
The DAM maturity model

Before you buy any DAM sofware, make sure you know where you are on the DAM maturity model. You want a system that's right for your business now – and can also grow with you over time, but you don't want to purchase features you will not use in the near or mid-term.

While assessing applications, it is recommended to purchase requirements 2-3 years out – so you can grow into a tool over time and not be limited by it. For example, below is an overview of the DAM maturity model, keeping in mind you can use all or some of the forms in a single platform.

	Basic DAM	Brand Compliance	Marketing Operations	Enterprise Content Management
Business Need	Centralize creative files, documents and media. Need files in one place, with permissions access and ways to categorize files in a way that makes sense so they are easily searchable and shareable.	Ensure creative is on brand & logos, brand assets and other creative files are accessible so the broader team understands guidelines and work is approved before it is distributed.	Streamline marketing processes such as creative briefs, creative project management (with design and job management) and brand materials ordering.	DAM as the single source of truth for creative files across the organization, with custom taxonomies and advanced integrations with third party systems. Can include Brand Compliance and Marketing Operations capabilities.
Attitudes	The shared drive is driving me crazy and we are losing control of our creative content. There is duplication and no measurement of who is using what, and the effectiveness of our content.	Managing approvals in email is too hard and you need to control the quality of creative everywhere. An audit trail of usage and sign off is critical. Heavily regulated industry laws define the approval process for collateral.	Managing marketing projects and budgets in spreadsheets is inefficient and chaotic. I need a system to manage creative processes that is auditable, creates efficiences and better measurement	We can't find anything, we have massive creative procurement inefficiencies. We are constantly double handling assets across multiple channels. There is no creative compliance throughout the organization.
Key Functionality	Simple, cloud based DAM with metadata management, automatic keyword tagging, usage reporting and alerts.	DAM with workflow approvals, dynamic creative templates and custom brand guidelines pages.	DAM with workflow approvals, custom forms and dashboard reporting on projects, tasks, designer workload and approval status.	DAM with workflow approvals, custom forms, dashboard reporting and connection with CMS & other marketing apps.

DAM feature comparison list

This list of 'must have' DAM features will make it easier to consider and compare different DAM products and vendors. Please print out the following four pages to compare software:

	IntelligenceBank	Other
Digital Asset Management		
Upload any file type – Office, InDesign, Photoshop, Illustrator, EPS, TIFF, GIF, PNG, ICO, SWF, MP4, AVI, MP3, and others. Includes automatic de-duplication warnings upon upload.	✓	
File size upload via browser – 10GB per file, via desktop uploader – Unlimited.	✓	
Bulk manage files: upload, download, apply metadata, add to lightboxes, delete.	✓	
Apply custom presets to assets or on the fly transformations.	✓	
Bulk download assets in multiple file types, or with multiple tranformations applied.	✓	
Download files – in different sizes and formats on the fly, including cropping.	✓	
Customizable dashboards that can be tailored to show outstanding production tasks, recently uploaded assets and manage creative templates.	✓	
Lightbox collections with sharing.	✓	
Version control.	✓	
Universal connector functionality to drag and drop assets from your DAM into hundreds of web-based applications.	✓	
Playback audio, video and preview images.	✓	
Watermark files.	✓	
Email links to files to both registered and non registered users.	✓	
Title view, thumbnail view and carousel view.	✓	
Automatic keyword tagging – when you upload an image, IntelligenceBank can automatically suggest keyword tags for your images.	✓	
Facial recognition with auto-tagging - helps you match files to people faster.	✓	
File transcoding – convert files on the on the fly to different sizes and formats.	✓	
File check in and check out.	✓	

DAM feature comparison list

	IntelligenceBank	Other
Workflow, Annotations & Collaboration		
Publish workflow – approval a file before it's published.	✓	
Download approval – approve a file before it's downloaded.	✓	
Feedback approval – get general feedback on a file.	✓	
Staged workflow approvals – create a custom hierarchy of sign-offs before a file is approved or released.	✓	
Run custom reports and download workflow stats and data in excel.	✓	
Comments on PDF's and images with 'streaming' conversation.	✓	
Copyright and Compliance		
Review dates on files with alerts when a file is due to be reviewed.	✓	
Dynamic creative templates, whereby end users can edit specified parts of a locked-down InDesign file. Templates are linked to the DAM library and workflow approvals can be added for additional control.	✓	
Talent and copyright fields with tracking.	✓	
Link files to model/talent release forms.	✓	
Audit trail and granular usage reporting by file, by user and overall.	✓	
Calendar view of renewal dates.	✓	
Marketing Project Management		
Custom databases to begin and manage projects, to include custom fields you require.	✓	
Custom fields include open text, select, currency, date and lookup fields to link to other databases.	✓	
Instant reporting on the status of projects.	✓	
Link project records to creative files.	✓	

DAM feature comparison list

	IntelligenceBank	Other
Metadata and Search		
Advanced search: title, description, document contents, keywords, file metadata, freeform keywords, mandatory keywords, embedding keywords.	✓	
Automatic extraction of metadata upon upload.	✓	
Boolean and faceted search – search millions of assets within 2-3 seconds.	✓	
Mandatory keyword filter data for lateral searches.	✓	
Export all metadata into excel.	✓	
Sharing		
Automatic email alerts upon upload or new version.	✓	
Email links to files and folders to registered users.	✓	
Email links to files to non registered 'public' users.	✓	
Embed digital assets into third party websites.	✓	
Share digital assets in social media.	✓	
Custom brand guidelines pages to educate your team.	✓	
Public galleries – create a web page from your DAM so anyone can browse and download files.	✓	
Instantly updatable Content Distribution Network (CDN) links to original assets or versions with transformations applied.	✓	

DAM feature comparison list

	IntelligenceBank	Other
Administration		
Custom branding – colors, fonts, masthead and email templates.	✓	
Add users and set granular permission	✓	
Integration with Active Directory and SAML for single sign on.	✓	
Data migration and implementation services available.	✓	
Hosted and backed up daily in premium Data Centers.	✓	
Ability to merge multiple files to create a single PDF.	✓	
Custom dashboard reports on file expiration, workflow approvals and expired talent usage rights. If project management is used, you can calculate workload by designers, manage budgets and other expenses.	✓	
Detailed usage reporting – all actions by file, by user and overall; including emails sent and links clicked.	✓	
Integrations		
Web CMS applications – i.e. WordPress, Drupal, Sitecore.	✓	
Adobe Creative Cloud connector – links files from IntelligenceBank to InDesign, Illustrator & InDesign.	✓	
Social media platforms.	✓	
Sharepoint.	✓	
Microsoft Office.	✓	
Handshakes - workflow integrations that connect files and data from your DAM to other tools.	✓	

What are the typical DAM packages?

Digital Asset Management

For Managing & Sharing Content & For Powering Personalization

Features include:

Starts at 500GB data

Digital Asset Management

Video Conversion

Email Alerts & Email Links to Public Users

Share & Embed Media

Lightning Fast Search, Global Filters & Metadata

Auto-Tagging

Lightbox Collections

Main Admin

Dashboards

Custom Branding

iPad & Mobile Friendly

Securely Hosted & Backed Up Daily

Free Updates

Premium Implementation & Data Migration

BrandHub

Centralize Creative & Manage Brand Compliance with Online Brand Guidelines and Integrated Digital Asset Management

All DAM Features +

Starts at 500GB data

Workflows & Approvals

Custom Brand Guidelines Pages

Creative Collaboration

Dashboard Reporting

Premium Implementation & Data Migration

Marketing Operations Platform

Streamline Marketing Operations With Digital Asset Management, Creative Approvals, Online Brand Guidelines, Marketing Project Management & More

All DAM & BrandHub Features +

Starts at 500GB data

Marketing Projects

Calendar & Planner

Kanban Board

Marketing News

Marketing Disclaimers

Premium Implementation & Data Migration

& Data Migration

Optional services and add-ons

Adobe Creative Cloud Connector

CMS Connectors

Dynamic Data Connector for Creative Templates

Custom URL

Storefront & Brand Portals

API & Handshakes

Public Portals

White Labeled Apps Portal

Sandbox Test Service

Additional Users & Data

Universal Connector

Creative Templates

Design, Support & Training Services

Single Sign On

Two Factor Authentication

Anti-Virus on Resource Uploads

Private Cloud Hosting Options

Amazon S3 Remote Connect

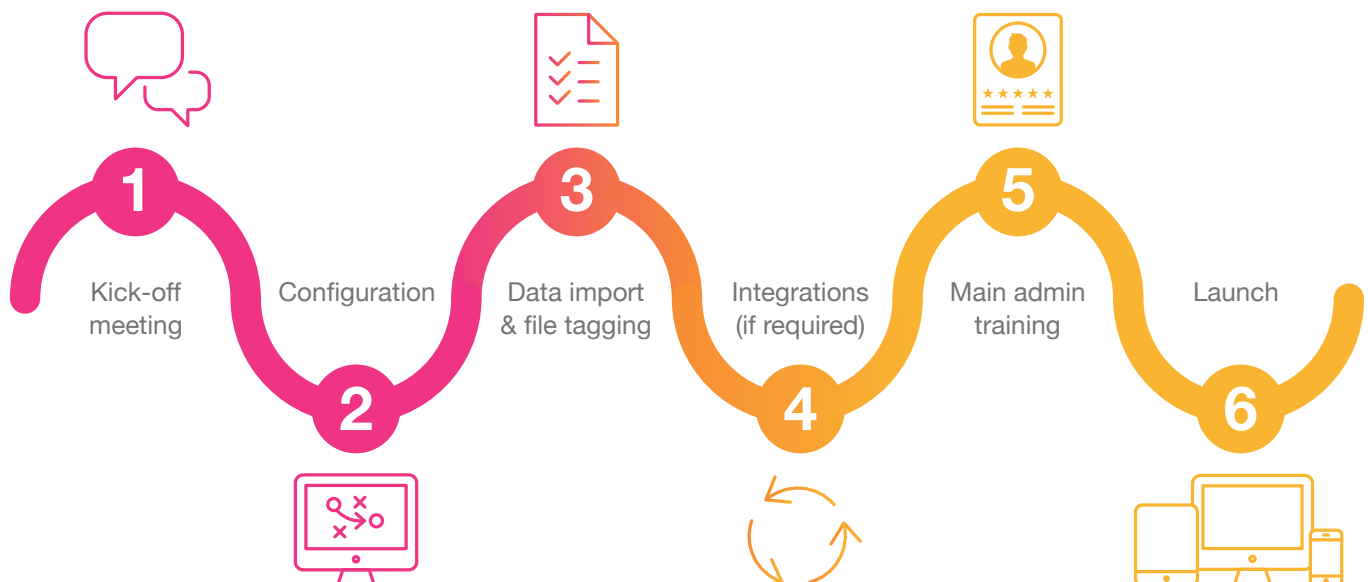Public Link Data Packages

Facial Recognition

DAM Implementation

Implementing a DAM can be a daunting process, as like most organizations, you probably have creative files scattered across shared drives, consumer sync services and individual desktops – not to mention the challenges of not having proper tagging and naming conventions.

However, the IntelligenceBank team have turn-key methodologies to help you migrate your data, configure permissions and workflow, brand your platform, automatically keyword tag the assets and help you successfully launch.

Your implementation plan may be simple and straightforward, or it might be highly detailed and complex. But the fact is, when your creative content management processes are feeling disorganized and inefficient, that is the perfect time to implement a DAM.

From the time we receive your files, folder structure and workflows, a DAM implementation usually takes 3-6 weeks and includes:

1. Kick-off meeting
2. Configuration
3. Data import & file tagging
4. Integrations (if required)
5. Main admin training
6. Launch

Buying DAM software – your key considerations

One you have figured out the type of DAM and hosting you require, here are the top 7 things you should think about when assessing a new DAM platform:

1. User interface

Does the DAM make you think too much? Make sure your DAM is user-friendly so your end-users enjoy the experience and actually use it.

2. The need for speed

Don't test your demo software with a handful of images – give the navigation and search functions a good workout with thousands of images. If the system is too slow, your users will become frustrated – and may slip back into bad habits.

3. Vendor response times

Choose software that comes with a responsive team. If you're chasing vendors down on pricing or product information, guess what? The service you receive from that vendor when you become a client will likely be just as poor.

4. Security

While DAM files are generally public-facing, data security remains an important issue. Ensure your data is stored in ISO27001 certified data centers, and that the vendor is either SOC2 or ISO27001 compliant.

5. Feature list

Ensure the DAM provider has all the features you want now – and also has room to move in the future. Your use case will evolve, so your DAM software should be able to keep up.

6. Roadmap

Talk to your DAM vendor about their roadmap to ensure your DAM solution will always be launching innovative products.

7. Integrations

Your DAM should never be an island. Even if you're not ready now, make sure your DAM solution can integrate with third-party applications, single sign-on and has a robust API for future integrations.

Get to know IntelligenceBank

IntelligenceBank is the world's leading Digital Asset Management, BrandHub and Marketing Operations Software company. We help content marketers work better and more seamlessly, manage digital assets, creative content approvals and compliance, and creative project management. IntelligenceBank's beautifully designed platform is used by over 400 leading brands with 350,000+ users across the globe.

If you would like to know more about how we can virtualize your marketing operations, our friendly experts are just an email or phone call away.

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