Cycle Time

Localizing printed collateral for pan-regional markets

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Journal of Digital Asset Management (2008) 4, 301–304. doi:10.1057/dam.2008.45

Most executives in DAM know from experience that the right combination of process automation and operational excellence can produce stunning results: dramatic reduction in costs, improvement in business agility (or the ability to exploit short-lived opportunities).

In particular, I want to examine business process automation associated with the localization of printed collateral — how DAM for rich media and textual assets support the dramatic reduction of cost and cycle time.

Pan-regional marketing communication often entails the development of advertisements, brochures, data sheets, flyers, mailers, posters and web content suitable for 20–30 local language markets — each market requiring translated text and regionalized imagery.

Thus, pan-regional marketing communication consists of several thousand discrete projects per year. An in-depth examination of a typical project, from its specification in strategy to its production and delivery to points of sale and consumption, reveals several workflows, involving tens to hundreds of individuals across a pan-regional marketing operation.

The figure on the next page depicts three key workflows of pan-regional marketing operations and related marcom groups.

Creative workflows entail the work of a marketing team at a headquarters and of global creative partners, producing master campaigns and brand identities. If the offered products

include packaging and retail point of purchase merchandising, creative workflow will include two or more creative partners or teams. Creative workflow nonetheless will produce a *design master* and *copy text*, usually delivered as an Adobe InDesign or QuarkXpress file with companion illustrations, images and fonts to a regional marketing operation, such as the one focused on Europe, the Middle East or Africa (EMEA).

Localization workflows start with a regional marketing group that provides adaptation insights and a *localization brief* — instructions and Guidelines for each regional localization team, with 5–15 teams for EMEA.

Each language often requires *translation treatment* — two or three ways of interpreting English text into a local language (Figure 1).

Adaptation workflows often start with the delivery of finalized translations to a local marketing office that coordinates with a local creative partner to rework the English-language design master for 20–40 local markets.

Adaptation workflows produce *certified production-ready output*, usually Acrobat PDF files that a print specialist has processed, quality checked and certified for the technical production requirements of a specific print and printing press.

The number of these technical requirements for display ads and printed collateral exceed 40,000 for EMEA alone and change whenever a printer updates or replaces a printing press.

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Figure 1: Localization of just one of three workflows. Localization of pan-regional marcom may entail several complex, multi-round collaborations for an average of eight unique design masters for printed collateral

The certified *production-ready output* addresses the added complexities of different page designs.

Some page designs incorporate advanced graphic designs, such as spot varnishes, die cuts, six-color processes, and close alignment or registration of vector and rasterized artwork.

Other page designs use product information tables, commonly used in catalogs and in direct response promotions, which may also display technical data and prices in a local market currency — any of which may change at the last minute.

Finally, many localized adaptations of promotional materials will publish the names,

contact information and location for retail outlets of partners — who open new stores or relocate existing ones throughout the year.

In summary, the figure to the right depicts a largely manual, nonautomated process that takes four to six weeks per design master. Research by GISTICS reveals that a major new product launch for EMEA markets will produce 6–10 pieces of collateral for each of the 20–40 markets serviced. This typically results in one or two delayed pieces per launch market; retailers often wait until they have a complete set before fully promoting the new product.

HOW EACH PROCESS-MATURITY LEVEL PAYS

A workflow automated does not represent a binary, on or off state; rather, we can automate workflows and process in a progressive, ever-more integrated and optimized way.

To that end, we can use the process-maturity model to explain progressive automation and paybacks. Each process-maturity level in such a model constitutes a stabilized operational capability of what we call a center of excellence such as a pan-regional collateral operation.

Figure 2 depicts the typical savings accrued by level of process maturity of a pan-regional collateral operation. These figures represent the new savings realized by each level and do not include savings from previous levels.

Estimated cost avoidance represents the total potential savings, including hard-cost savings in the form of lower direct expenses and soft-cost savings in the form of unburdening employees and independent contract workers.

Productivity dividend represents the amount of money — hard-cost savings — that a firm can reallocate to other expenditures. For this reason, we call the productivity dividend new money, calling attention to the opportunity to buy more media or be creative within a pre-existing budget.

Time-to-market days gained represents the total potential acceleration of marcom workflows and processes. In practice, however, most firms “reinvest” 30–50 per cent of the days gained in achieving greater refinement or optimization of individual marcom projects, greater levels of integration with other marcom activities, and fewer late-night hours and weekends.

Total number of staff days saved aggregates hundreds to thousands of 5- to 20-min slices of each worker's day.

Days available for new projects summarizes these 5- to 20-min slices of time across an entire marketing operation.

FUNDS AVAILABLE FROM GREATER PRODUCTIVITY INCREASE STRATEGIC SPENDINGS

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Figure 2: Process-maturity model. The greatest savings and number of freed-up FTEs result from centralized collateral production, emphasizing the dramatic reduction of local in-country resources dedicated to translation of copy, regionalization of imagery and production of final artwork for printed collateral

Total number of staff full-time equivalents (FTEs) saved represents a realistic summary of operational efficiency gains. To realize this gain, however, managers must reallocate and reprioritize the work assignments of their staff and contractors.

FTEs available for new projects represents the realistic outcome of such a reallocation of work among staff and contractors.

The data suggest that a better, more efficient way to localize marcom materials and produce finished print-ready advertisements and collaterals can achieve significant levels of cost

avoidance — what we call a productivity dividend.

In particular, the data identify a number of full-time equivalents (FTEs) or staff that the productivity dividend makes available for new projects, as well as identifies how many already-budgeted funds the productivity dividend frees up for more strategic expenditure.

In summary, these data make the case a firm can realize progressively greater productivity dividends through greater levels of process automation and integration.