Cycle Time

Michael Moon

is President of GISTICS and a lecturer and leading authority on digital asset management, automation of marketing services and multichannel brands. He has delivered more than 300 keynotes, presentations, executive seminars, workshops, and web-based seminars around the world. His book *Firebrands: Building Brand Loyalty in the Internet Age* has been published in 13 different languages. He also conducts primary research through surveys and one-to-one interviews. Michael and his team advise international-brand corporations on multichannel strategies for brand management and digital asset management, including Amway, Boeing, Disney, Frank Russell Company, Gap, General Motors, FCB, Hallmark, Hasbro, Leo Burnett, Nokia, Sanoma WSOY, TeliaSonera, Thomson Corporation, VF Corp and Warner Bros.

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, WHAT REMAINS THE SAME?

Updating the old French proverb about change gives us the opportunity to examine an important facet of digital assets: how do digital assets affect the productivity of individuals that reuse and reexpress preexisting digital media and other types of digital files?

In this column, I intend to develop a comprehensive (and hopefully cogent) view of digital asset management (DAM) as a core organizational resource, or as economists will one day call it, an economic utility of the post-information age.

With the editorial contributions of thought leaders and visionaries in this and future issues of the *Journal of Digital Asset Management*, we will continue to advance the idea that digital assets have real and lasting economic value.

In the future, companies will not only quantify the value of their digital assets, most of these companies will place the value of digital assets on their balance sheets; digital assets will become a tangible asset of a company, just like equipment and money in the bank. This will, of course, take years of hard work and a lot of persuasion. Nonetheless, we have begun.

WHERE TO START?

I propose that we start in the “middle of it” and at a fundamental level: “as a knowledge worker, what’s it in for me?” This will entail examining the nature of knowledge work and the productivity of knowledge workers.

More than 30 years ago, Peter Drucker, noted management theorist and guru, coined the term “knowledge worker” to describe a new labor class. According to Drucker, a knowledge worker does not produce a physical good, nor

does he or she render a service as traditionally defined in economic theory (repairing a shoe). A knowledge worker produces information that other knowledge workers use in the performance of their jobs.

In 1999, Drucker offered a theoretical model for measuring the productivity of knowledge workers.

Figure 1 visually models and extends Drucker’s theory, depicting the two underlying, virtual questions that frame the performance of a knowledge worker’s job.

Every knowledge worker, including you and me, asks:

- Who owes me what types of interactions, information, and/or experiences, fulfilled how?
- I owe to whom, what types of interactions, information, and/or experiences, fulfilled how?

Drucker asserts that we can measure the productivity of knowledge workers by tracking how quickly we complete two processes.¹

First, productivity represents how quickly a knowledge worker can frame a request for information (interactions or experiences) and get an acceptable response. Getting acceptable responses highlights the role of search, metadata, and relevancy rankings within global DAM systems such as Google or Yahoo! as well as within our own DAM systems. Slow or inefficient search engines and the lack of consistent metadata remain the dirty little secret of the internet and the information age.

Secondly, productivity represents how quickly this worker can respond to a request for information (from another person); how quickly we can provide an acceptable answer defines the second metric for knowledge-worker productivity.

Michael Moon
GISTICS Inc.,
4171 Piedmont Avenue,
Suite 210,
Oakland CA 94611, USA
Tel: +1 510 450 9999
Email: moon@gistics.com

Figure 1: The two underlying, virtual questions that frame knowledge worker performance

This metric suggests why DAM administrators should not allow their creative personnel or subject matter experts to create or apply metadata to digital assets. Creative personnel or subject matter experts cannot anticipate, nor can they envision how dummies or various types of users outside their particular realm (creative or subject expertise) would search for a particular digital asset. This situation emphasizes why every DAM system of size requires the services of a librarian and a user experience professional.

Librarians know how to transverse realms of expertise and establish strong and repeatable linkages between the “I need something like ...” of a particular individual and high-quality source materials which would satisfy that need. This one capability delivers stupendous value.

User experience (UE) professionals perform a function similar to librarians with one major difference: UE professionals know how to suppress or delete non-essential data and functions that a DAM system presents to its users. UE professionals understand that *less is indeed more*. Fewer non-essential data and functions mean that the interface designer understands the nature of a user’s work and, more particularly, the activities and tasks that a knowledge worker needs to complete — in either framing a request for information

(interactions or experiences), or responding to a request for information from another person.

Many factors influence the productivity of knowledge workers. No matter how quickly things change, at least one thing remains the same: requesting and providing answers to specific questions define productivity of not just users of DAM systems, but users of any type of information system. We can and should measure how quickly various users of our DAM systems request what types of answers from whom and how quickly our users provide acceptable answers to whom.

Our theory of knowledge-worker productivity also bears many implications for the management of brands — the end-use consumers of marketing communications.

As end-use consumers visit websites, produce self-service satisfactions, share their experiences with individuals and with any number of communities of practice (concern, expertise, or collective bargaining), their behavior becomes indistinguishable from that of knowledge workers. No meaningful distinction exists between corporate end-users of a DAM system and end-use consumers or stakeholders in your brands. Measure this and the king will follow.

Reference

1. Drucker, P. (1999) *Management Challenges For the 21st Century*, HarperBusiness, New York, NY.