Cycle Time

Carbon monoxide costs in your marcom supply chain

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Executives worldwide recognize Michael Moon, President of GISTICS, as a dynamic lecturer and leading international authority on DAM, automation of marketing services, and multichannel brands. He has delivered more than 300 keynotes, presentations, executive seminars, workshops, and Web-based Webinars around the world. McGraw-Hill and its international affiliates now offers Mr. Moon's book, *Firebrands: Building Brand Loyalty in the internet Age* in 13 languages. Michael and his team advises 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, SanomaWSOY, TeliaSonera, Thomson Corporation, VF Corp, and Warner Bros. His firm publishes two landmark, industry-defining publications: the annual DAM Market Report and the Roadmaps and Best Practices for DAM 2004. GISTICS develops these reports from primary research that first began in 1993, collating data from thousands of surveys gathered each year as well as annual one-on-one interviews.

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Previously, we examined several factors that affect the creation and value of digital assets. We introduced “supply chains” to frame a larger context for cycle time — how to improve the overall time to market at crucial points in the lifecycle of digital assets. In this column, we examine the human side of supply chains and, specifically, how inefficient communication and interaction contribute to huge delays in creating digital assets and launching new products. In particular, a closer examination of potential chokepoints within a new product launch team suggests how automation might provide time-to-market gains.

Figure 1 depicts many of the actors who contribute to the overall success of a marketing launch. This figure does not depict, however, duplication of staff and handoffs of global marketing operations. Pressed with absolute deadlines, each contributor must perform designated tasks in very narrow time frames. Working across multiple time zones, the demands of a global launch can quickly become a 24-h process management challenge.

As this figure suggests, every doubling of the number of contributors squares the number of opportunities to miss key deadlines and, ultimately, a market launch date. Large teams spread throughout a global market spend

significantly more time coordinating and double-checking their work than small teams in smaller, unified markets. Effective automation of the *distribution* of digital assets and repository-assisted *localization* of these assets enable large, globally distributed and otherwise clumsy teams to respond with the agility of a small business with tightly focused teams.

The logic of distributed media services and centralized marcom often breaks down when you ask the question, “Exactly what can we automate?” My company's analysis of successful automation projects in the area of marketing operations indicates that a firm can successfully deploy automation from the bottom-up, targeting a few strategic chokepoints in pre-established and operational workflows. This also suggests that DAM, when linked to strong project management and collaboration systems, can reduce costs, time-to-market and late nights. More recently, we have uncovered another weak link in the marcom supply chain: users situated in geographic areas that do not enjoy stable high-bandwidth internet coverage, in particular, areas with high packetloss and rudimentary internet infrastructure — what we call the Beijing, Baghdad and Bogota problem. Managed Asset Delivery solutions can speed the secure, error-free and audited digital downloads of often very large media files by users in geographic

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Figure 1: Just 248 workers result in a peer network with 30,628 potential connections and 73,507 daily interactions per new product launch. When linked to strong project management and collaboration systems, DAM can eliminate a significant number of these daily interactions and the more than 2 weeks time-to-market lost

areas with traditionally poor internet service levels.

PROJECT-EVENT LIFECYCLE MODEL

Digital collaboration and problem solving across the marcom supply chain increase the productivity of knowledge workers. Digital collaboration and problem-solving platforms also speed up the rapid, low-cost formation and ongoing support of communities of practice and networks of expertise that drive new launches.

Digital collaboration and problem solving across the marcom supply chain work by reducing needless time delays and miscommunications, as well as by providing supply chain-wide standards for governance and detailed uniform reporting of results and key performance indicators across all collaboration groups.

Figure 2 depicts a *project-event lifecycle*, calling attention to nine major phases of a major new product-launch as well as 50-plus subordinate events—social interactions of knowledge workers that produce meaningful results. We use this model to capture activity-based data.

Strategic intent establishes the context for the project, linking a firm's business model, goals

and cultural norms to a new product or enhanced customer value. Gap analysis provides an assessment of a firm's current core competencies and market position, as well as those competencies and positions the firm must develop to win in the future.

Opportunity discovery entails the basic work of building conceptual maps of markets that the firm intends to serve, existing and likely competitors, and what types of firms might provide complementary technology or possess customers to whom the company might sell an existing portfolio of products or services.

Project scoping frames the allocation of resources, including likely team members and how much time they might be expected to provide the project. Project scoping also entails defining business goals, key performance indicators and costs.

Resourcing and planning begin the execution of the project. In many cases, project execution requires securing the commitment of key team members and assigning responsibilities and deadlines.

Conceptualization support validates the availability of digital assets and publishing resource. Conceptualization support summarizes

PROJECT-EVENT LIFECYCLE FOR A MAJOR LAUNCH	STRATEGIC INTENT
	Establish project vision
	Conduct gap analysis
	Define expected outcomes
	OPPORTUNITY DISCOVERY
	Analyze market landscape
	Develop target list
	Refine target list
	PROJECT SCOPING
	Plan requirements
	Establish business goals and KPIs
	Align with other projects
	Estimate costs
	Promote project
	Establish execution plan
	RESOURCING & PLANNING
	Establish project charter
	Commit to outcomes
	Make/negotiate resource offer
	Establish budgets
	Establish high-level schedule
	Establish responsibility matrix
	Establish strategic project plan
	CONCEPTUALIZATION SUPPORT
	Initiate submissions processes
	Conduct discussion, review
	Make team assignments and set roles
	Establish strategic brief
	Facilitate gating decisions
	FEASIBILITY TESTING
	Establish proof
	Establish project plan
	Conduct design review
	Drive phase to closure
	Obtain management approval
	DEVELOPMENT
	Conduct resource scale-up
	Implement design
	Make regulatory filing
	Conduct usage/safety investigation
	Maintain strategic decision documentation
	Conduct design review
	TRANSFER
	Manage validation process
	Develop final specifications
	Obtain safety approvals
	Maintain strategic decision documentation
	LAUNCH
	Complete documentation
	Initiate full-scale production
	Create and produce packaging
	Review final product
	Drive project closure
	PRACTICE REFINEMENT/RECORDS MGMT
	Conduct post-project reviews
	Formally document process
	Capture learnings
	Execute regulatory reporting
	Execute certification
	Execute journaling
	Establish backup and offline storage
	Execute disposal and destruction

Figure 2: Every major project within an enterprise entails a sequence of many discrete events. This model depicts 50-plus internal events of major product launch, framing the flow of 500–1000 large digital files around the world

a go-forward plan in the form of a strategic brief or business plan, emphasizing key decision points and indicators of success.

Feasibility testing starts with a model or mock-up and a detailed project plan. This may entail review, commentary and approvals from dozens to hundreds of stakeholders, including industry partners and trusted customers. With market validation in place, the project team then argues for funding; this may entail extensive mock-ups and use-case scenarios.

Development entails production. In some cases, product entails three parallel processes: the manufactured good, packaging and marketing communications collateral. In some industries, one to all three of these processes requires regulatory filings and proof of compliance — massively complex and iterative workflows that may entail the back-and-forth transfer of large digital files (CAD, product shots, etc).

Transfer entails the hand-off from R&D or engineering to procurement and manufacturing — the back-and-forth transfer of large digital files. Launch in this model consists of turning everything over to marketing, sales, training and services. For many firms, *Launch* may constitute a new project-event lifecycle for customer solutioneering and other customerization activities that also entail the transfer of large digital files.

Practice refinement and records management entail the necessary work of closing out a project, examining how to approve future performance and satisfying regulatory requirements for reporting and record keeping. Records management defines a set of activities for archiving documents and related communications (including emails, text messages, faxes and telephone journals).

We suggest that you use a project-event lifecycle model such as this to benchmark the hidden “carbon monoxide” costs in your marcom supply chain, quantifying the costs and delays that result from ineffective and inefficient collaboration and creative problem-solving — how to save time, reduce costs and speed up cycle times for new launches.