Cycle Time

Getting Beyond the 90-90 Rule

Michael Moon

Journal of Digital Asset Management (2006) 2, 265–268. doi:10.1057/palgrave.dam.3650052

Spanning the three decades in hi-tech industries, I have picked up a number of useful insights and rules of thumb. In this column, I will examine the more annoying of these rules and offer a way to break it with nothing but happy results.

The 90-90 rule states that after completing 90 per cent of the technical work, another 90 per cent remains to be completed. This applies to the development and deployment of DAM systems.

First, many developers of DAM system think, breathe, eat and sleep technology. Fair enough, that's a big part of their job. One of the hardest parts of their job, however, entails understanding how various users will use myriad functions and in what kinds of business settings and online interface configurations.

This brings us to the functionality of many DAM systems. Did you know that most enterprise class DAM systems support 1,500 individual functions? Did you know that all but a handful of users take advantage of less than 50 of those 1,500 functions? And of those 50 or so functions, did you know that 10 or so of those functions produce 80 per cent of the total value from using the DAM system? By the way, that 0.8 per cent solution also typifies most enterprise systems such as CRM, ERP and enterprise content management.

Next, many initial users confound DAM system developers, requesting what appears as arbitrary or whimsical changes to the DAM, its configuration or functionality. The reason for that comes down to a few variables. One, initially users did not understand how the DAM can and should fit within their workflows. Two,

DAM can often alter user workflows and social patterns in radical and unpredictable ways. Three, most users resist changes, however small, in workflows and social patterns. Four, most DAM system developers do not know how to anticipate changes in user workflow or social patterns — “not my problem” many say under their breath.

As many of us have discovered, socialization of change, introduction of improved or more efficient ways of working and operationalizing the ingest and tagging of new assets constitute the bulk of the real work in the deployment of DAM systems — the remaining 90 per cent that we indicated previously.

If only we knew how to “future pace” new users, socializing dramatic changes to user workflows and social patterns in a virtual space without performing any real technical work.

GETTING IT RIGHT UP FRONT

I propose a different way of developing and deploying large, complex DAM systems. We start with a few guiding principles — outlined as a transitive proof or series of progressive statements:

- A. Well-defined *business requirements* drive most buying decisions for enterprise technologies and services.
- B. Development of well-defined business requirements entails the creativity and problem-solving expertise of proven *change agents* — whom we call solution evangelists or solutioneers.

Michael Moon
GISTICS Incorporated,
4171 Piedmont Avenue
210,
Oakland, CA 94611,
USA
Tel: +1 510 450 9999
Fax: +1 510 450 0954
Email: moon@gistics.com

- C. Solution evangelists build a consensus within groups of executives who comprise the *decision influence team*, getting individual decision influencers to support or authorize a significant expenditure of money and resources.
- D. The criteria for satisfaction within decision influence teams emerge in an often circular and known-only-to-insiders fashion, where the team links new insights and uncovered facts to the buying organization's *current state* and desired *future state*.
- E. Well before decision influence teams expose their inner workings to external vendors, key decision influencers must commit to a *change agenda*: a cogent declaration of the current state, agreement about a desired future state, acceptance that the organization lacks internal resources to realize the future state, crisp definition of buying criteria and conditions of satisfaction and a commitment to execute a disruptive change — key factors of long sales cycles.
- AE. The fastest, least problematic path to achieve commitment to a change agenda entails the work of proven change agents — *solution evangelists* — who clarify the buying criteria within decision influence teams, and facilitate the often circular route to execute a disruptive change.

With these principles in mind, I propose using few onsite workshops — immersive, participatory small groups and expert facilitation — that a future pace new users to the DAM way of working. Figure 1 depicts what we call collaborative solutioneering workshops that we delivered for IBM and Apple.

ACTION PLAN

This workshop consists of all the major stakeholders in your DAM system. We found it best to conduct these workshops off site, away from email and office interruptions. While I won't delve into the myriad details of this 2-day offsite workshop, I will summarize a few of the key highlights.

The workshop begins with a crisp, cogent explanation of the purpose for DAM as a

business strategy and how the workshop will elicit everyone's contributions across a broad range of topics and areas: business strategy, technology, content operations, users, training and support, etc.

Next, the project CTO (or equivalent) details a preliminary technology roadmap and digital business architecture — how that DAM enhances your business, increases revenues, speeds up product launches and lowers costs. A facilitated discussion follows, asking everyone to edit or amend any part of this presentation. These discussions begin to produce what we call an “opted-in stakeholder” and solutioneer.

This leads to a facilitated discovery and prioritization of use-case scenarios. In some cases, this may entail asking volunteers to take on a particular job-role and describe a “current state” workflow and how it would change if in that job-role they had access to all the digital assets and contextual information (rights, places where anyone has used an asset, etc.). We strongly recommend using wire-frame user interfaces and user-metadata interaction worksheets to make the “future state” workflow more concrete and explicit. We provide samples of faceted taxonomies and asset-class portfolios. We also hand out activity cells that detail the action-steps that a particular job-role would perform, asking for workshop participants to estimate the amount of time it would take to complete, how much money might it entail and how many times a week or month would they perform this activity.

Then it gets interesting: we have everyone break down into small peer-led learning pods and give them the assignment to *re-draw* the technology roadmap and digital business architecture, *detail* how DAM would enhance a particular business model, *estimate* the economic value of chosen use-case scenarios, *map* the “future state” workflow, *prioritize* discrete elements of faceted taxonomies and asset-classes within a chosen portfolio and *confirm* the “must have” asset classes and contextual information. As they complete one assignment, each pod presents its work to the entire group. With Monopoly money or a fun equivalent that we have distributed, we ask them to “buy” technology roadmaps, digital business architectures, content strategies, use-case

Figure 1: Solutioneering workshop.A.1.4.

scenarios, “future state” workflows and discrete elements of faceted taxonomies.

Enlightenment hardly describes this portion of the workshop!

Many new technologies entail a disruptive implementation process; most buyers will balk until they feel comfortable with disruption-recovery procedures. The agenda for this portion of workshop entails the facilitated discovery of risk-mitigation strategies, using collective insights from workshop participants:

- Identify deployment and start-up risks.
- Rate the impact and probability of these risk occurring.
- Agree on best-practice mitigation action-plans.

Again with Monopoly money, we ask them to “buy” best-practice mitigation action-plans.

System acceptance starts with economic buyers releasing funds. Thus, making a compelling business case often requires that an advocate within a particular company make the case on your behalf. To this end, we co-create with workshop solutioneers, a set of decision support tools.

Facilitated discovery of decision support tools used by internal advocates, including:

- Needs-analysis worksheets and ROI calculators.
- Requirements-gathering workshop templates.
- Topics for Webcast presentations and white papers.

And again with Monopoly money, we ask them to “buy” business cases, ROI tools and insight resources.

As we bring the workshop to a close, we ask our now fully vested solutioneers to help define the DAM system as a branded new product, using the cultural norms of that organization and how they launch and brand new offerings. Then, we ask the participants to review the value proposition, brand identity and marketing collateral that we intend to use, identifying any item that rings hollow, untrue or off the mark.

This entails the facilitated group-validation of an integrated brand-marketing strategy, outreach communications and evangelism practices, including:

- Corporate positioning.
- Naming conventions and unique selling propositions.
- Website content, features and functions.
- Presentation decks and speaker’s notes.
- Brochures and datasheets.

It also might entail the facilitated discovery of desired solution partners, including trusted introductions to key executives from these types of firms:

- Infrastructure OEMs and System Integrators.
- Software platform ISVs and hosting partners.
- Software application developers and consultants.
- Usability and information architects.
- Training and support organizations.

All throughout these workshops, a facilitation team takes copious notes and detailed sketches and later summarizes their work in a workshop binder.

In the course of these workshops, we accomplished the remaining 90 per cent of the work in deploying a DAM system: how to socialize dramatic changes to user workflows and social patterns in a virtual space and without performing any real technical work.