

Compellingly Connected

How Integrated Content Management can
Fundamentally Improve the Way Enterprises Work.

Though we live in a highly connected world, our enterprise content is often woefully under-connected. Segregated in silos, many companies struggle to aggregate, unify, and present holistic and coordinated content to internal stakeholders as well as external partners, suppliers and customers. That's largely because content isn't integrated on the back end, making it impossible for front end technologies to use it in more meaningful and effective ways.

In a recent survey conducted by London Research, no more than 37% of businesses claimed to have a centralized content management hub. This lack of content interconnectedness often stalls innovation and slows down time to market – or completely inhibits the ability to tell a brand story. Integrated content management can be one solution to fundamentally improve the way enterprises work.

What is Integrated Content Management?

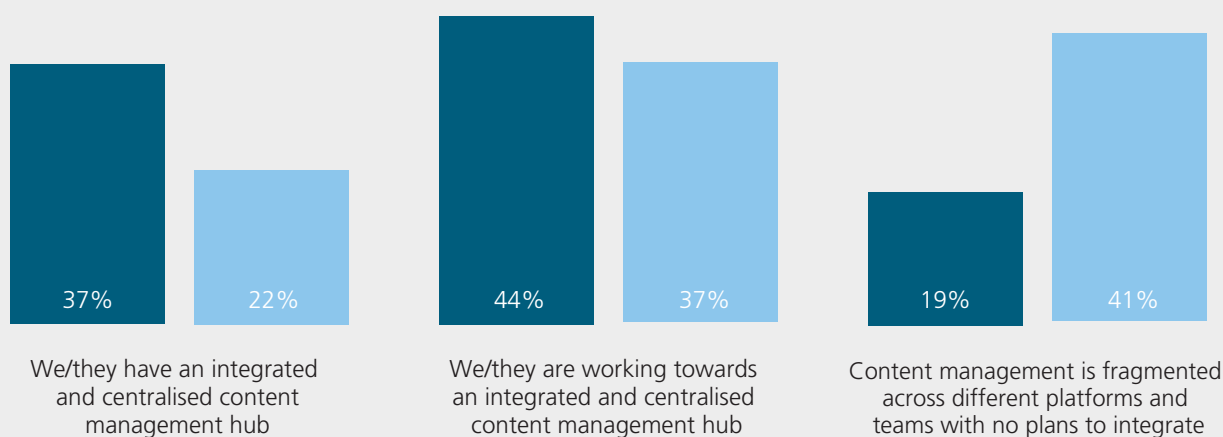
Over time, as enterprises evolved individual repositories of product lifecycle information, enterprise resource planning, digital assets, and master data, the management of those repositories became increasingly fragmented. A creative brief would sit on a designer's computer, a project plan would get emailed around and soon be outdated, product data would be stored in inaccessible databases with no web-based user interface, and

images would be resting on shared drives scattered around the intranet.

More recently, omnichannel digital marketing became an imperative, making things even worse. Content from all of these repositories needed to be viewed, planned for, managed, and aggregated in the context of a new product launch or campaign. For example, a print ad needs to use the same image and message as the ads used on digital channels. Still, a variety of formats are required. The increasingly wider array of output channels emphasizes the imperative to unify, unite, consolidate, and automate.

Integrated Content Management (ICM) is the practice of bringing content and data together from different sources into a unified, single tool, and often a single user interface, also. ICM is now the “holy grail” for large enterprises and product companies in particular, driven by various industry forces:

- 1) The need to manage content, data, and digital assets created by different departments, agencies, and individuals in a centralized “hub”.



Source: *The State of Universal Content Management 2020*,
London Research, April 2020

Company respondents
Agency respondents

- 2) The goal to deliver consistent and targeted omnichannel experiences.
- 3) The desire to centrally measure performance – and to understand how small changes to a bigger collection of content affect the rate of success.

Benefits of Integrated Content Management

When done properly, ICM can fundamentally improve the way enterprises work. It can facilitate content discovery for internal stakeholders, make the planning process easier, and speed up content's time to market. It can even help make better decisions and achieve a high degree of automation through the use of state-of-the-art tools like artificial intelligence and machine learning.

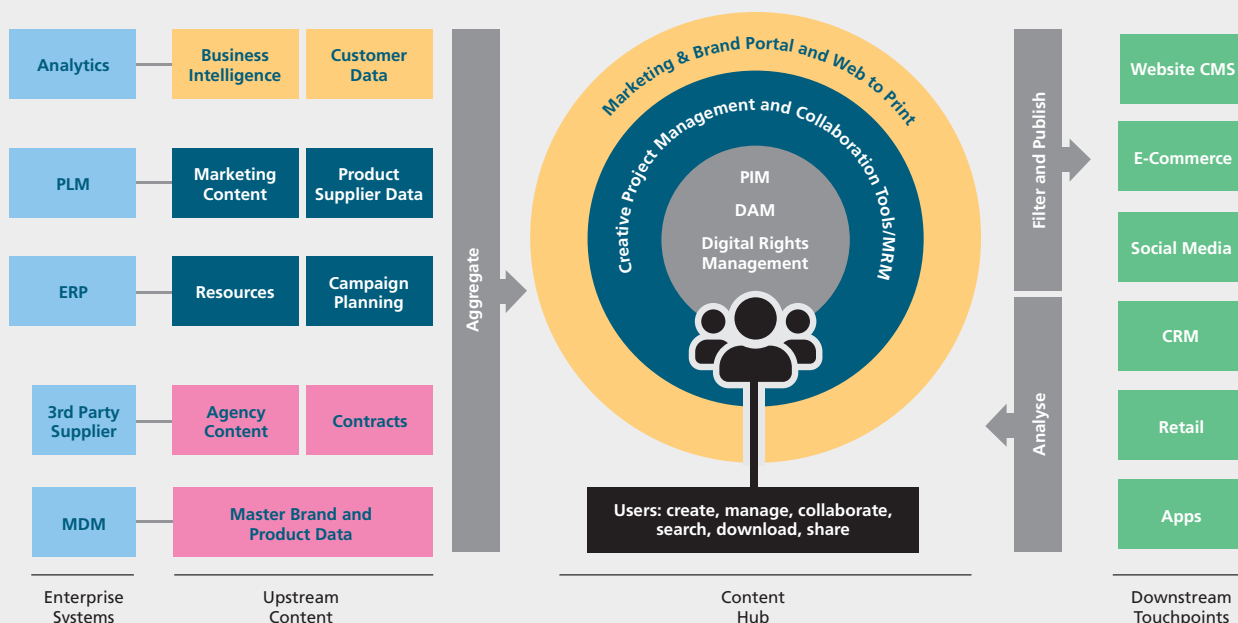
More data aggregated around a digital asset, for example, can facilitate deeper topical auto-tagging of an image's contents, and also more accurately target that asset to a customer downstream, based on preferences. Simple implicit metadata, such as

the EXIF standard that comes from a camera, can be used to derive additional information from the cloud such as characteristics of the location where it was taken (GPS location > beach > Bondi beach in Australia might lead to "sunbathing", "surfing" and "sharks"). This, in turn, makes images easier and quicker to find.

By providing a foundation for downstream "consuming systems" (such as web content management, marketing automation, e-commerce) to consistently use a single source of truth, the overall content ecosystem becomes a well-oiled machine. When assets and data are managed holistically as integrated content, communications between marketers and customers is smoother, more accurate, relevant, and consistent.

In effect, ICM creates a set of compound digital assets: collections of images, video, data, and creative or marketing text. By integrating the pieces, we can better elicit what we want from the body of content that the enterprise has created, using increasingly intelligent technologies.

The MarTech Ecosystem



The modern logical architecture of integrated content management is shown above. Various enterprise content and data sources are aggregated into a central content hub, with a user interface that allows marketers to work with digital assets, product data, rights, and campaign planning simultaneously. Image source: Vox Veritas Digital in collaboration with ICP.

Combining integrated content and processes

For all we talk about automation, it's very hard to drive automated external delivery of content and assets without first integrating it into compound content on the back end. With imagery, data, and marketing content linked and coordinated, it becomes easier to facilitate the process of campaign creation, approval, and deployment.

When content is integrated in a unified interface, stakeholders can go to one place to plan, manage, and publish not just individual assets, but whole campaigns. To facilitate work with external partners and agencies, a media portal is often part of that solution, tailored to each group so that planning can be segmented appropriately. When multiple projects are running simultaneously, collaboration and commenting tools help teams stay focused and keep feedback in one place.

Also, when content is integrated, it can be tested for comprehensiveness and completeness, based on a set of standards.

Successfully Integrating Content

The ideal of integrated content is one many enterprises are planning for or working towards, but those who have achieved it point out that they underestimated the level of effort it would take. BSH Hausgeräte GmbH, one of the leading global manufacturers of home appliances and a censhare customer, undertook a yearlong effort to aggregate digital assets and product information, to be able to drive more automated publishing.

As a product company, BSH approached integrated content management with product information as the organizing principle in what can be called a “PIM-centric” approach. Based on a product, they designed a unified data model and brought together all their information about each product into one content hub. *(See the detailed BSH story on page 5.)*

Integrated Content Management Benefits

- 360° view on products, features, and related assets
- Improved and more consistent data quality and completeness
- Reduced number of systems, tools, and interfaces
- Better, centralized usability.

Integrated Content Management Enables Enhanced Storytelling

BSH Home Appliance Group needed to update its content management system to make it easier to tell localized, brand-specific stories about product features that integrated a wide range of different content and data. For example, many countries will want different features on a cooker, as people use them in different ways, or place more or less importance on characteristics such as energy efficiency.

This is no easy task for a manufacturer offering hundreds of different products across several brands, with versions marketed to a large number of countries, all requiring text translations. BSH's previous systems failed to support the new way their marketing teams needed to work. The legacy Product Information Management (PIM) system was cumbersome, based on a dedicated data base, a text editor, and a Media Asset Management (MAM) solution. The text editor used complex user interfaces which were difficult for inexperienced users to navigate.

As a consequence, BSH decided to invest in a completely new solution that could aggregate and present all information in one place. BSH already had a clear vision for the project and selected censhare, with its integrated DAM, PIM and Content Management solution, to achieve the goals.

By December 2019 all brands were live using an integrated content management that enables better product and brand storytelling and faster routing of content for localization. Their content hub is constantly checking against other source repositories for very specific data, ensuring everything is accurate and up to date, automatically correlating product data and stories. The system is now serving the expected 3,000 users via two data centers, one in Europe and another in Asia.

The screenshot displays the BSH content management interface for the HRG675BS1B Oven [English (United Kingdom)]. The interface is divided into several sections:

- Header:** Includes navigation links like "Create asset", "Actions", and a search bar.
- Left Sidebar:** Contains "My pages" (Dashboard, Favorites, Last created, Last edited, Stored searches, Trash, My tasks, Watched) and "Open" (HRG675BS1B Oven, HRG675BS1B Oven [English (Unit)]).
- Main Content Area:**
 - Overview:** Shows a preview of the oven and a list of tabs: Overview, Classification, Texts, Countries, Relations, Media, Details, Communication, History, Administration.
 - Preview:** Displays a large image of the oven and a list of features: Serie | 8, Built-in oven with added steam function, Stainless steel.
 - Feature Story:** A section titled "Added Steam Function" with the headline "Crispy on the outside, juicy on the inside." It includes a sub-headline and a paragraph explaining the benefits of the steam function.
- Right Sidebar:**
 - Completeness check:** A progress bar showing 100% completion.
 - Required:** A list of checks: Country Status not valid (checked), Data not blocked (checked), Data Release Sales Internet (checked), Main image (checked).
 - Optional:** A list of checks: Hookline (checked).
 - Release:** A section showing the workflow step "Released" with a green dot.
 - Show empty properties:** A toggle switch set to "OFF".

In this example from BSH, data from various sources and digital assets are brought into a single, integrated interface, facilitating better planning, collaboration, and unified content deployment.

Data Sources and Governance

An important dependency of a successful integrated content management approach is determining the authoritative source repository for each data type in the content hub. For example – a product specification would normally be developed in a PLM (Product Lifecycle Management) system, and then put into a PIM system when finalized. Once sourced and available in a content hub, product specifications are not usually changed or modifiable by marketers. You may choose to lock down certain fields, and if there are any changes necessary, a return of those changes to the source repository should be required.

In order to ensure a proper approach, be sure to check against the following steps:

- 1) Determine the complete set of data, content and assets that should be available in the integrated content hub
- 2) Determine the most appropriate master source for each component, and what should originate in the hub
- 3) Develop a convincing business case for the hub, and bring it to other departments and repository owners, ensuring the value is communicated and that there is buy-in

- 4) Work with the source repository owners to ensure that the API capability exists to pull and check against the master source on a regular basis
- 5) Determine if any data will be modifiable/writable downstream, and if so, what procedures need to be in place in order to maintain consistency and accuracy across the stack
- 6) Develop a specification for how the hub will be built and maintained, and build a team to implement and operationalize.

While this list gives you a starting point, your journey to a fully integrated content management hub won't be a short one. Content hubs are developed not over weeks, but many months and sometimes, taking longer than a year. Subsequently it becomes a core business application, one that requires substantial and long-term operational resources. Don't underestimate the effort required, but also, with a proper effort put in, the benefits can be innumerable.

Conclusions

When it comes to achieving the goals of modern marketing and brand storytelling, the value of integrated content is unquestionable. There's a better user experience for internal stakeholders, enabling more visibility and flexibility with the go to market approach. The ability to create packages, campaigns, and collections around a product, event, channel, or geography is core to modern marketing success.

Be sure to be aware of the level of effort involved. Plan budgets, resources, and infrastructure accordingly. Have your business case and your baselines well documented, so you can track and measure success later. Finally – always be looking ahead. As your marketing team develops more brilliant plans and ambitions, your integrated content hub must be poised to support it.

The result will be more relevant and acutely targeted experiences, ones that delight your customers and grow your business.

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