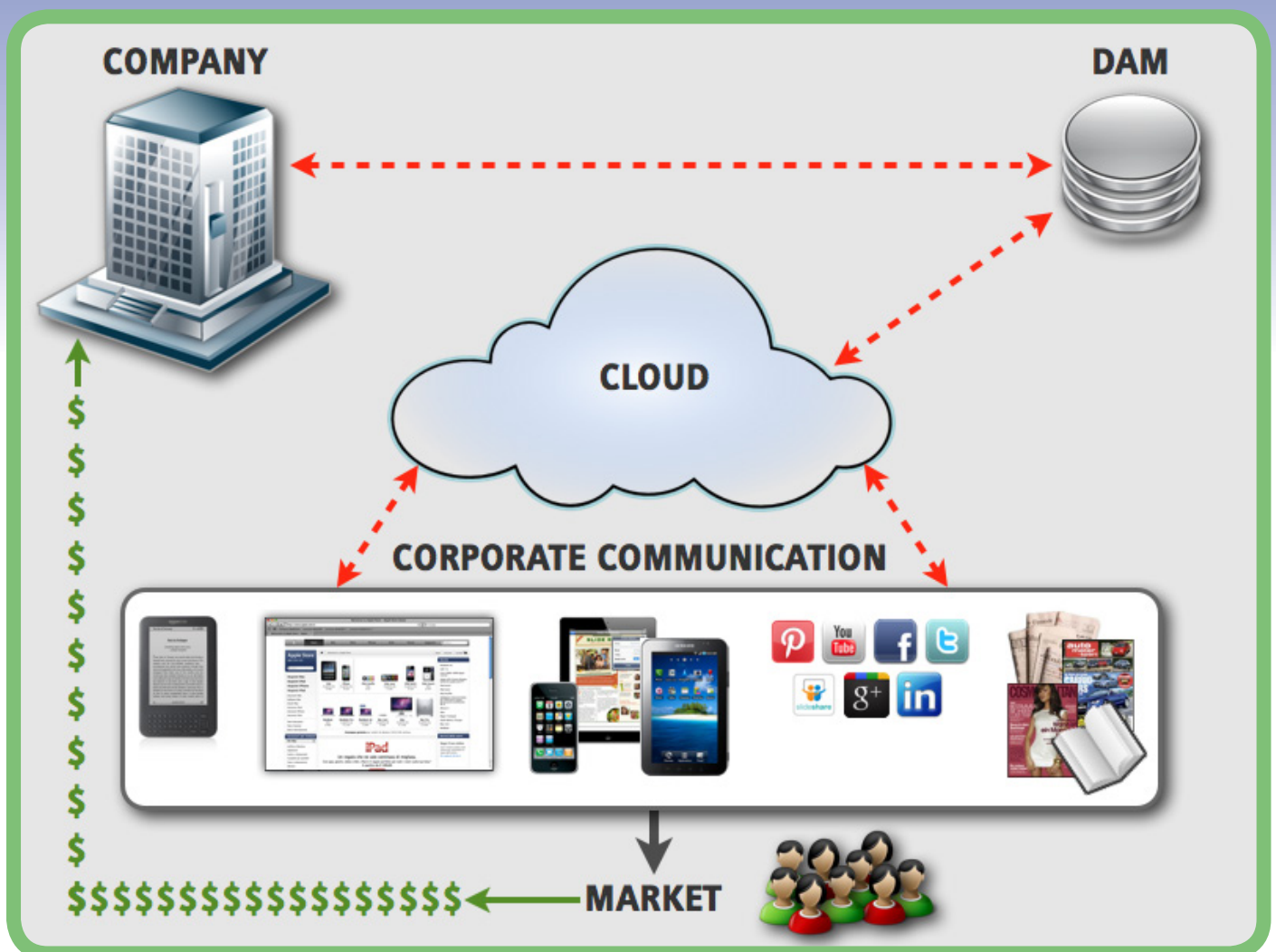


DIGITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT

FROM SILOS TO CLOUD COMPUTING
THE PROFITABLE WAY TO IMPROVE
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE



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Digital Asset Management: from silos to Cloud Computing the profitable way to improve customer experience



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Author Luca Leonardini, March 2013

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Introduction: The concept of asset

When talking about Digital Asset Management, the word asset obviously refers to the digital content or files managed by the DAM solution. But this term originates from the financial and economic sector: the Dictionary of Economics & Business defines asset as *“any type of property or possession, tangible or intangible, that has a monetary value or bears income.”* In fact, **all files routinely created, managed, distributed, and shared by a company have a precise economic value as a function of the time, human resources, and techniques used in their creation.** The concept of economic value implied in the term asset should encourage entrepreneurs not to underestimate the hidden costs of non-quality triggered by the lack of a proper content management strategy.

In every type of industry or market, digital content is made up of four basic elements:



TEXT



IMAGE



VIDEO



AUDIO

A problem of quantity

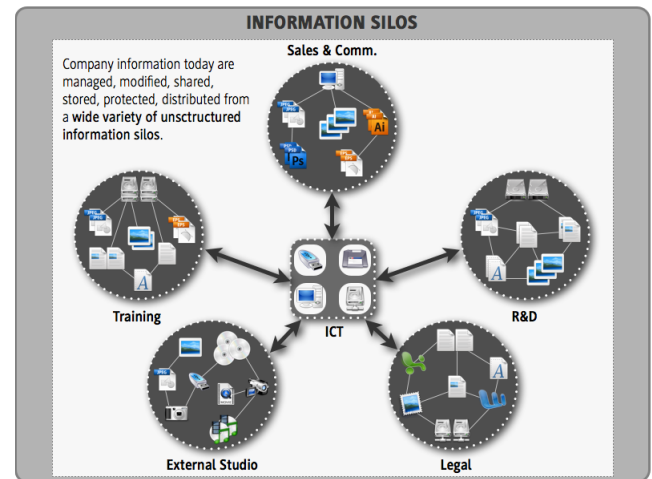
We often think of newspaper and magazine publishers as the companies that produce and distribute the greatest number of pages. This is unsurprising, as we are used to associating the idea of printed content with its most visible and tangible form: the magazines and newspapers we see stacked in newsstands. These products are strictly monolingual and, with the exception of some regional editions or special inserts, usually consist of a single main issue. Have you ever wondered how many pages are created every year by a publisher and distributor of newspapers and magazines? Well, a medium-sized group that

publishes perhaps 20 daily newspapers and 40 periodicals prints nearly 1 million pages: a newspaper of 64 pages and 360 issues prints about 23,000 pages per year - multiplied by twenty newspapers, we get **460,000 pages**. A magazine of 192 pages and 50 issues prints about 10,000 pages per year - multiplied by 40 magazines, we get **400,000 pages**. This very simple count brings us to **860,000 pages**.

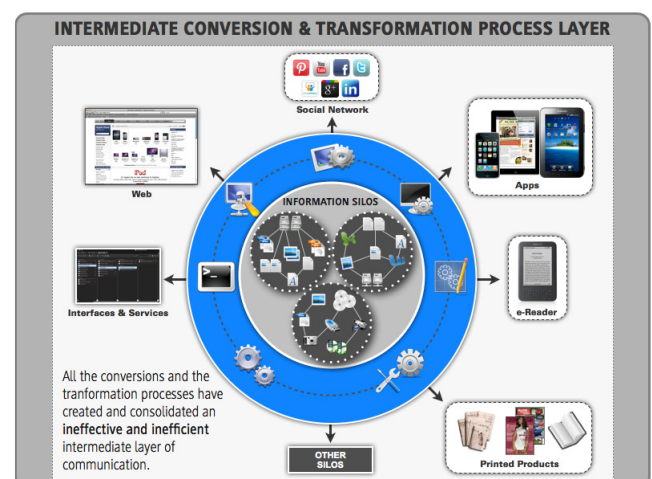
The numbers in the service or production sectors are no less than in publishing, primarily because their customers are not restricted to the national level (and therefore to a sin-

gle language), but extend to all international markets with an unknown number of linguistic variants. Let's consider the example of an automobile user manual of about 300 pages, produced in 35 languages: we already have 10,000 pages for just one car model and one type of manual. If we keep in mind that this same model line also has marketing catalogs, texts for sales training and technical training, contracts, legal, technical documentation, etc. (!), **we end up with around 100,000 pages of content for just one car.** Multiply that by at least twenty models, and we can see that the number of pages produced and distributed by one industry is no less than what some publishers produce. Take the examples of a shoe manufacturer, a car manufacturer, an insurance company, or a banking group: to ensure an active presence globally, these companies must produce and manage all their communicative content in 15 to 35 languages, including at least one or two revision cycles during the year for each set of content. Add video and pictures of the same product, with specific variations according to the market, and it's easy to understand how a DAM solution and content management strategy are vital elements for global communication in such contexts.

So far, we've used the page as the unit of measure, but now let's take a look at neutral content—text and images published in various forms. This is an important differentiation, for two reasons: first, the number of neutral assets managed in a DAM is significantly higher than the number of pages. With an average of three articles per page (excluding advertising), a single newspaper creates and maintains 69,000 articles annually (not to mention that each item is made up of at least 3 or 4 elements—image, text, title, and caption).

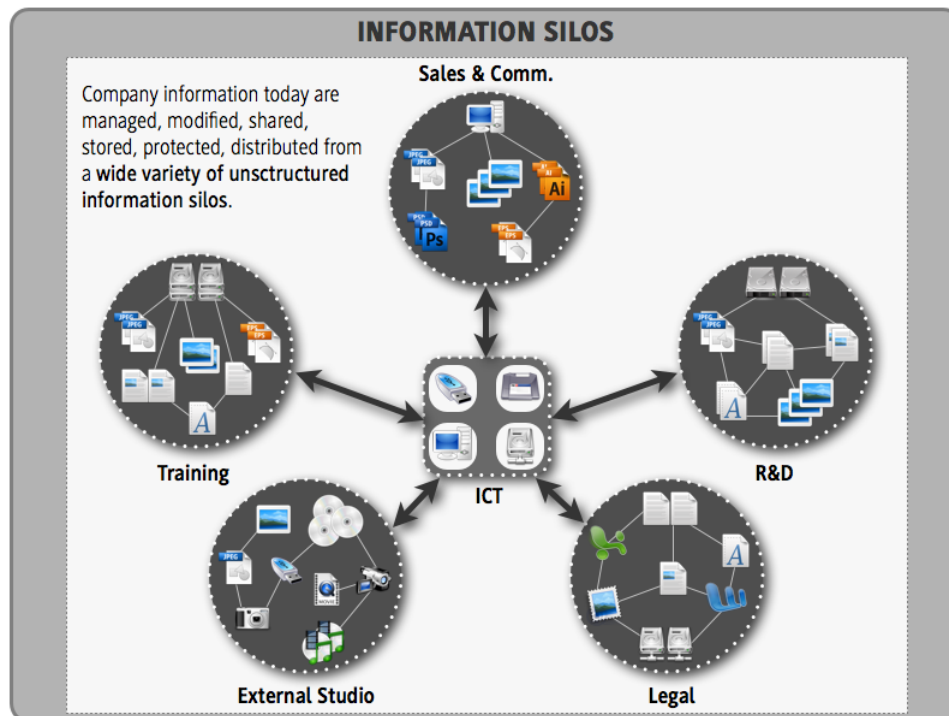


The second reason relates to the explosion of technology that has powered and continues to support the spread of new devices, from tablets to e-readers, that has **radically transformed the concept of "page," making it a logical entity that is much more flexible, dynamic, and profound** than the way we used to understand it. Today the page is a flexible concept that dynamically adapts to any device, every channel, many digital formats, and most importantly - through connections or embedded material - contains information in quantities that were unthinkable until recently. All this translates into a significant enrichment of the end user experience.



The silos effect

The examples and data presented above are intended to encourage reflection, not so much on the numbers as much as on the scalability of the models and their reproducibility in the vast majority of companies. Keep in mind that any manufacturing or service company active on international markets today produces 8 to 10 language variants of all its documentation: you can imagine how important it is to **implement a DAM solution to effectively manage and distribute such a variety of content in real time.**



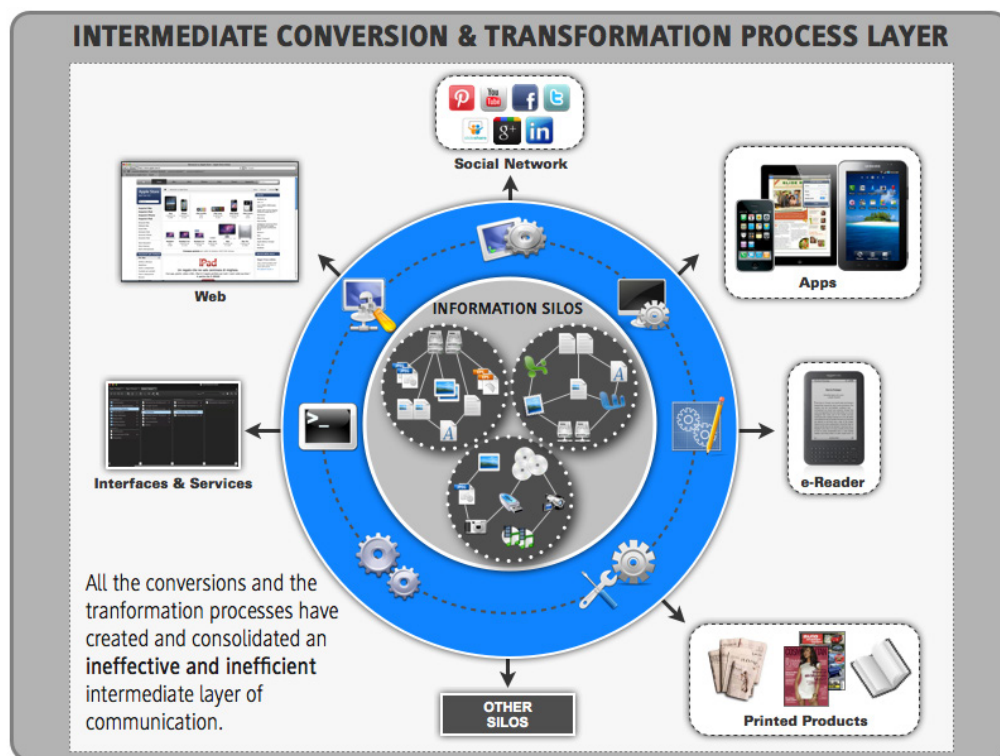
Let's move on from content to the company areas where content is created: sales, communication, R&D, human resources, support, services, legal, finance, training, logistics, management, etc. Without a proper strategy, content production tends to be displaced within each activity center, dispersed into different functional areas with little or no interfunctional connection. Up until now, a "do it yourself" ethic ruled, resulting in each area fending for itself and its own needs and eventually isolating itself from the others. **This phenomenon unintentionally created silos, which hampered an overall view of the real need for efficiency and effectiveness in communication processes.** Many areas became increasingly involved

in similar projects, unnecessarily duplicating time, effort, cost, and inefficiencies.

All of this continues on due to force of habit – because it's always been done this way, and **no one raises the issue of effectiveness of communication processes from the larger operational perspective of the entire organization and not just a part of it.** It follows that the ICT infrastructure becomes an anomaly, a hub that supports organizational functioning by providing separate services and assistance to different disconnected areas, instead of acting as a connective tissue for the entire organization, connecting each of its parts in a transversal and cross-functional way.

The problem of dispersion

The effects of this approach on day-to-day corporate reality can be encapsulated into a single concept: dispersion. Efforts, resources, cost—everything is dispersed among the different areas of the company, with countless copies of the same content (texts, logos, images, illustrations, graphics, descriptions, etc.) sitting on different company servers, all rigidly separated.



Unstructured, or dispersed, content is a symptom of a lack of collaborative work structures.

In fact, dispersion and lack of collaboration are two sides of the same coin, with the following negative consequences for the company:

1. **maintaining a greater number of servers than necessary**, resulting in inefficient storage of files, which means unnecessary costs for the purchase and maintenance of hardware and software and for physical space, resources, and expertise.
2. maintaining a non-collaborative work structure throughout the company **creates a high-stress component**, affecting the final

quality of work, profits, quality of environment, turnover, and group and individual performance.

3. maintaining an **unnecessary intermediate level of communication** between content and multiple output channels, increasing time-to-market and investment in technologies used to process and convert content into formats appropriate to the various target channels.

Components of the content management strategy

The content management strategy consists of **project components and infrastructure**, which we will discuss below. First, however, we should identify the main tools for conveying company communication through multiple channels, methods, devices, media, and formats:

websites

micro-sites

social media

videos and slideshows

apps

e-newsletters

printed commercial products

(brochures, catalogs, advertising, POS)

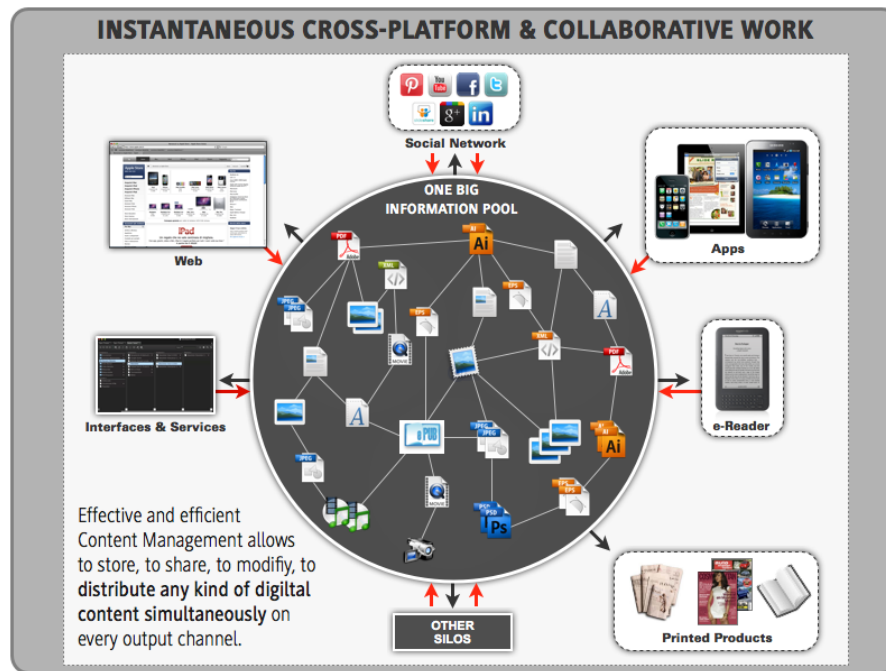
printed communication

(magazines, newsletters, internal newspapers)

business reports *(legal, financial)*

The key to a successful communication strategy is the availability and accessibility of content through each of these tools: **the communication must reach customers anywhere, anytime, and on any device**. Customers should be free to “consume” content - constantly updated, translated, adapted, and distributed in the most appropriate format - on their favorite tool. The degree of complexity in communication created by the development and dissemination of technologies for new devices suggests the need for further reflection on each of these tools: the creation, management, translation, publication, and multi-channel real-time distribution of all content **implies the upstream presence of effective management of the production and communication processes**. In other words, none of this is possible without a DAM solution.

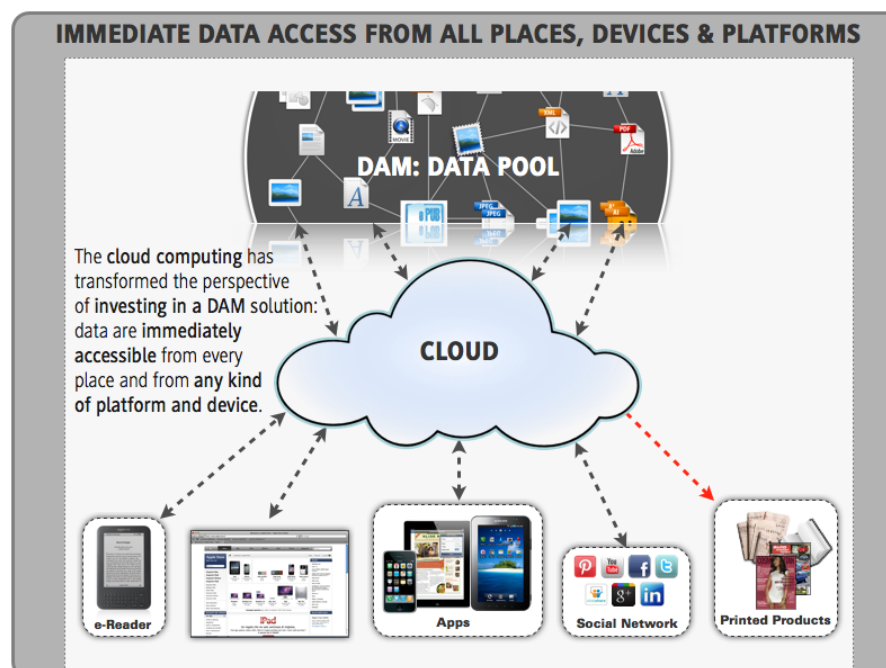
We know that one of the main components of a content management strategy is the structuring and sharing of collected content, organized and classified into a single DAM for the entire company. The DAM solution is the great container of digital content, with attached modules (preferably native and not third party) for expansion and enhancement of its functionalities. It works on media-neutral content - the most effective way to eliminate unnecessary intermediate level processes for transformation and conversion into various output formats, as shown above. This approach also offers maximum flexibility in the “consumption” of content, which can be updated and modified anytime, anywhere, and from any device (tablet, smartphone, e-reader, and laptop) with maximum security.



So the structuring of content corresponds to the design component of the content management strategy: the implementation of the necessary process of change management. There is also an **infrastructure component**, which involves aspects of the existent technology infrastructure into which the DAM solution will be integrated. It wasn't that long ago that a DAM required investment in a very diverse set of components: hardware, software (including third-party licenses), installation and imple-

mentation, software and hardware upgrades, security, site maintenance, staff skills, and project development. It's easy to see that under these conditions, and **without a common vision for the improvement of communication processes, the whole thing would often sink** under the enormous expenditure of time and resources required from the entire company.

But with today's **cloud computing technology**, the company is no longer required to bring



home an unspecified number of servers, with all that that entails. **This is a revolution that overturns and radically changes the prospects for investment in a DAM solution.** Cloud computing simplifies company life by freeing it from IT management, ensuring data security and immediacy of service continuity: the virtualization of IT infrastructure and applications also allows the company to take advantage of constantly updated services on the “pay per use” model, optimizing cost and performance. In essence, the company eliminates the tying up of initial investment capital and operating costs, controlling new operating costs with greater transparency by avoiding problems related to infrastructure, maintenance, and skills.

The primary benefit for a company that uses a DAM solution on cloud computing is the **flexibility that speeds up implementation of projects and makes them more easily scalable to actual customer demand.**

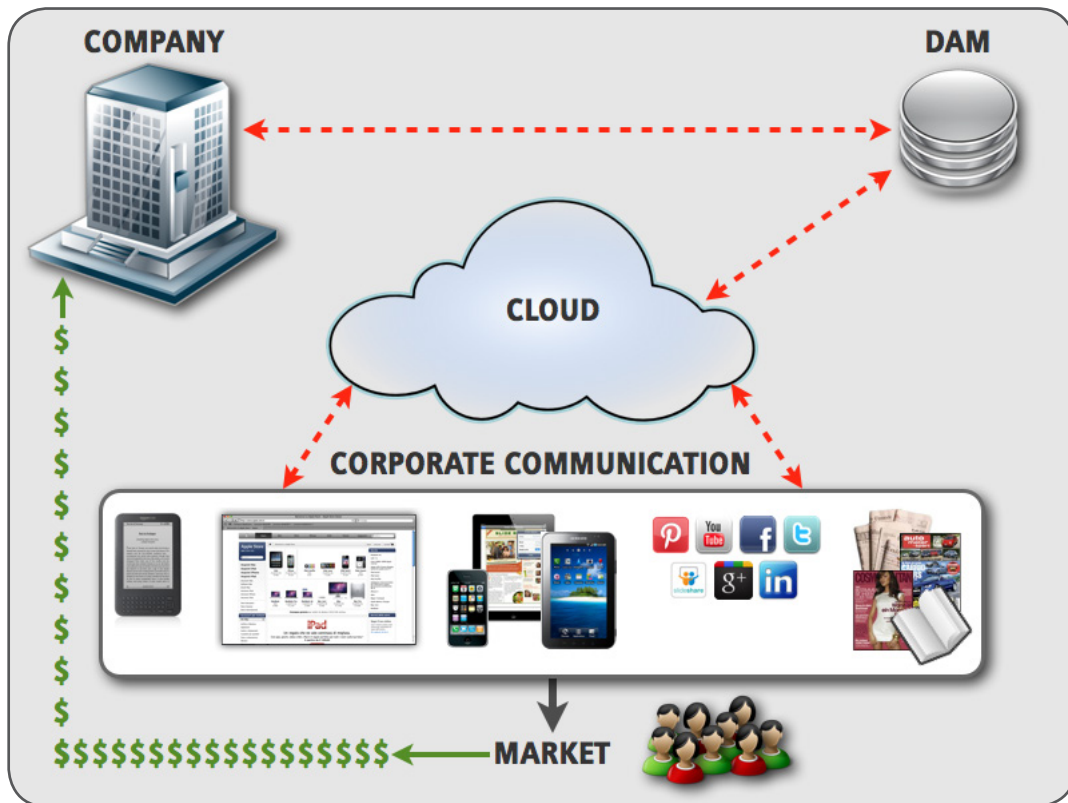
Conclusion

Digital Asset Management is the premier tool for sharing digital content, improving the level of cooperation between departments or units and bringing benefits such as:

- *reduction of maintenance costs*
- *decrease in technology investments*
- *optimization of all resources*
- *reduction of management costs*
- *increase in the quality of data utilized*
- *better quality of work and work environment*
- *greater ease of information access, use, and sharing*
- *better communication quality*
- *decrease in time-to-market.*

We must also add that a DAM solution on the cloud gives the company a great tool for rapid and increasingly flexible adaptation to the changing demands of the market—an extremely important competitive advantage for business.

The ever-increasing number of assets to be managed, the multiplicity of platforms, the diversity of devices used, and the advent of cloud computing clearly show the most secure and effective way to implement a DAM solution: develop a project as part of a **strategic change management plan aimed at improving communication effectiveness, and thus constantly improve the customer's content viewing experience.**



THINK BEFORE YOU PRINT.

