

The Business Value of Adobe Experience Manager Assets



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Executive Summary

IDC spoke with organizations about the impact of using Adobe Experience Manager (AEM) Assets, a cloud-based digital asset management (DAM) platform, to maintain, access, and use their digital assets. Interviewed Adobe customers have not only achieved significant operational efficiencies in digital asset management with AEM Assets but also improved their business impact with digital assets in support of their business activities.

Based on interviews with AEM Assets customers, IDC calculates that they will realize benefits worth an annual average of \$9.04 million per organization by:

- Winning more business through personalized and more relevant marketing campaigns and improved quality of services
- Lowering the costs of using third-party agencies for creating digital assets and content
- Enabling faster creation and delivery of various digital assets, including net new and renditions
- Leveraging digital assets to work more productively across various line-of-business teams
- Establishing more cost-effective and efficient digital asset management platforms

Situation Overview

In today's digital-first world, the management and optimization of digital media assets have become paramount for organizations across all industries. Digital asset management systems are at the forefront of this transformation, offering a suite of tools and capabilities that streamline the way organizations execute their rich media content. From enhancing brand consistency to optimizing content workflows, DAM systems are critical to how businesses manage, share, and leverage their digital assets.



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BUSINESS VALUE HIGHLIGHTS

\$58.4 million
higher revenue per organization per year

24%
lower spend on third-party agencies

55%
faster to launch new marketing campaign

38%
higher productivity, teams using digital assets

66%
faster to create new digital asset

73%
faster to create digital asset from existing assets

53%
more efficient digital asset management teams

868%
three-year ROI

5 months
to payback

The Essence of Digital Asset Management

At its core, a DAM system serves as an official clearinghouse for an organization’s digital assets, including images, videos, and documents. Acting as a central hub, meticulously organizing and managing all the rich media assets, the DAM system provides a unified view of these assets, making them easily searchable and accessible across the organization and by external parties who need to access the organization’s assets. This centralization is crucial for eliminating silos and ensuring that all stakeholders have access to the latest, most accurate versions of digital content via a “single source of truth.”

The digital landscape thrives on rich media — captivating images, engaging videos, and impactful audio files. These assets are the lifeblood of modern marketing, powering brand storytelling, driving sales, and fostering customer loyalty. However, managing them effectively can be a complex challenge. Disparate storage locations, inconsistent formats, and difficulty in finding the right file can lead to wasted time, frustration, and brand inconsistency. Moreover, the risk of legal complications from noncompliant use of licensed content adds another layer of difficulty to digital asset management.

DAM systems offer a set of capabilities designed to empower organizations to streamline content operations, optimize content workflows, and maximize the ROI from their rich media assets. Modern DAM systems expose core asset management features for diverse content and rich media types via specific UIs and workflows that can meet varying user needs across different departments. DAM administration features include role-based access controls and the ability to create customized portals to ensure a positive user experience for everyone, regardless of their technical expertise.

Key capabilities of DAM systems include:

- **Centralized access:**

By centralizing media, DAM systems significantly improve collaboration and enhance content reuse and performance from multiple integrated systems. Given the critical role that DAM plays in orchestrating business processes, it must be an open platform with strong integration capabilities, offering REST APIs, SDKs, and prebuilt integrations with popular applications.

- **Brand management and consistency:**

DAM systems ensure that all digital assets adhere to brand guidelines, maintaining consistency across all channels and touch points.

- **Optimized asset utilization:**

Through advanced search capabilities and metadata management, DAM systems help organizations maximize the ROI of their content assets by ensuring that they are fully leveraged throughout their life cycle.

- **Renditions and workflow automation:**

By automating workflows and asset versions, DAM systems can deliver device and channel-specific variations of a media asset. This includes providing templates for common workflows and a graphical workflow designer for business users.

- **Risk mitigation:**

Through robust metadata management capabilities — allowing for categorization, tagging, collection, and read-only portal creation — DAM systems help organizations avoid legal issues related to content usage rights — referred to as digital rights management — and compliance. This is imperative as GenAI makes its way into the content creation production process.

Maximizing an Asset's Value Throughout Its Life Cycle

Anyone who has a role in the digital customer experience needs access to the organization's approved digital assets. Numbers of applications that marketing, sales, and customer service use have grown, so has the need for a DAM system to sit alongside the content supply chain, assisting with the acceleration of content and delivery end to end. Furthermore, marketers are under pressure to create personalized assets faster as they increasingly rely on omni-channel delivery of more frequent, targeted, and personalized campaigns. Their rate of content velocity is reaching exponential proportions. At the same time, budgets for content creation are not growing at that rate. DAM systems are an answer. Organizations using a DAM system report significant benefits, such as increased conversions and revenue and reduced operational costs, including spend on duplicative assets. By optimizing content workflows and asset management, DAM systems drive higher ROI, shorter cycle creation times, and reduced friction in accessing and activating assets.

A DAM system not only centralizes and manages digital assets but also maximizes their value throughout their life cycle. This includes managing content variations, transforming and distributing content optimized for specific channels, and gaining insights into content performance. Additionally, DAM systems facilitate the discovery and automation of content workflows, driving collaboration and accelerating approvals.

Evolving Your DAM Strategy

Looking ahead, the ability to use and consume brand-approved content across orgs, systems, partners, agencies, and users is critical. Composable services make this easier because they are building blocks or collections of independent services to solve more than one DAM use case and expand for more users to access DAM content. Further, some DAM systems already offer even more advanced capabilities, such as delivering immersive 3D experiences and generating images from 3D models. These dynamic media capabilities further enhance the utility and impact of digital assets, ensuring that organizations can continue to innovate in engaging and captivating audiences.

Adobe Experience Manager Assets Overview

Adobe Experience Manager Assets is the digital asset management component of the Adobe Experience Manager platform designed to streamline asset management and activation while driving the democratization of content creation. AEM Assets supports global enterprises and organizations with multiple departments that need a centralized hub for organizing, searching, sharing, and reporting on digital assets, including emerging formats. AEM Assets also provides support for omni-channel delivery and broad distribution of assets to multiple teams, partners, agencies, and vendors. AEM Assets also serves as the system of record for final approved assets; facilitates collaboration between teams responsible for asset creation, digital marketing, and downstream asset distribution; and enforces compliance to policies and regulations for any use of licensed assets.

As customer requirements continue to evolve, Adobe has been extending its DAM architecture to support composable services with integration capabilities across martech stack applications and GenAI features such as metadata processing and management, as well as workflow automation. AEM Assets empowers businesses to address the escalating demands of content consumption and provides insights stored alongside the rich media to enhance efficiency and utilization.

Key capabilities of AEM Assets include:

- **Robust asset library services:**

AEM Assets lets users easily manage files, collections, templates, catalogs, and shared links. It manages content of any type; streamlines metadata assignment via templates, schemas, and processing profiles; and provides governance for asset controls. Search-based “smart collections” make it easy to define and share groups of assets while “smart tags,” based on AI capabilities, automatically assign metadata tags to images upon upload, dramatically reducing the time and effort required to tag assets and improving search.

- **Intelligent workflow capabilities:**

AEM Assets lets teams automate and streamline their workflows, improving team productivity and accelerating time to market. For example, AEM Assets’ built-in integrations to translation management solutions, in conjunction with multilingual metadata support, enable organizations to automate translation processes and support global campaigns. Further, Adobe Assets is at the center of the content supply chain with AEM Assets Content Hub, which brings GenAI capabilities to the different stages of creation, content, campaigns, activation, and insights.

- **Dynamic images:**

AEM Assets' Dynamic Media capability automatically generates versions of image assets that are optimized for the viewer's screen size and bandwidth; this eliminates the need to create, manage, and distribute multiple renditions of an image asset, thereby saving on storage, simplifying the publishing workflow, and ensuring an optimum user experience. Advanced capabilities, such as recoloring, cropping, and resizing, enable personalized media experiences.

- **Interactive media:**

In addition to its dynamic image, AEM Assets includes WYSIWYG authoring capabilities that let marketers create personalized immersive experiences, such as shoppable media, carousels, banners, customized video players, 360 spin sets, product configurators, and dynamic assortments.

- **Video capabilities:**

With AEM Assets, video can be automatically transcoded and autosized for all screens and adaptively streamed to ensure a consistent experience. Further, video delivery ensures faster load times and higher-quality video and imagery viewing.

- **Scalable asset distribution:**

With AEM Assets, organizations can quickly and easily create distribution portals to securely share assets with internal and external users. The system autoscales in response to additional usage in the product by users and increases in asset processing, and it increases storage as the repository grows. Asset processing is a dedicated cloud-native platform that offloads all processing from the core application to minimize impact to the application performance when content is being ingested or requested.

- **Integration with the Adobe suite:**

AEM Assets is tightly integrated with Adobe Creative Cloud, including Adobe Express with Adobe Firefly capabilities, along with several Adobe Marketing Cloud solutions, including Adobe Workfront, Adobe Experience Manager Sites, and Adobe Journey Optimizer. AEM Assets also offers APIs that enable integration with third-party applications such as product information management systems.

The Business Value of Adobe Experience Manager Assets

Study Demographics

IDC conducted in-depth interviews with organizations currently using Adobe Experience Manager Assets as their primary cloud-based digital asset management platform. Interviews were in depth in nature and designed to provide an understanding of the practical day-to-day impact for these organizations of using AEM Assets in quantitative and qualitative terms.

As shown in **Table 1**, interviewed organizations had an enterprise profile, with an average employee base of 24,538 employees and annual revenue of \$14.45 billion. They provided perspectives about the use of AEM Assets for managing and using digital assets from both North America- and EMEA-based organizations and varied industry verticals, namely consumer products, healthcare, food products, government, life sciences, and telecommunications.

TABLE 1
Firmographics of Interviewed Organizations

	Average	Median
Number of employees	24,538	9,500
Revenue per year	\$14.45B	\$1.83B
Countries	United States (6), France, Switzerland	
Industries	Consumer products (2), healthcare (2), food products, government, life sciences, telecommunications	

n = 8; Source: IDC Business Value In-Depth Interviews, March 2024

The Choice and Use of Adobe Experience Manager Assets

Study participants cited unique drivers of their choice to implement AEM Assets, but they coalesced around the need to unify, streamline, and organize their digital assets and content not only to optimize costs and become more efficient but to enable better use of digital assets in support of their business operations. They recognized that their previous approaches to handling digital assets, which relied more heavily on manual processes and less functional DAM solutions, prevented them from coming close to maximizing the potential value of digital assets and content. Moreover, they often lacked sufficient visibility into their digital assets to even understand the potential for positively impacting business operations and unlocking new business opportunities. These considerations led them to consider the more unified, functional Adobe Experience Manager Assets platform, especially in the context of the use of other Adobe solutions.



AEM Assets enables better use of digital assets in support of business operations.

Study participants described the main considerations factoring in to their decision to use AEM Assets:

Bring order to digital assets and content:

“We added AEM Assets because we had digital assets and content that were all over the place. We wanted to create a single repository and avoid duplication of assets and streamline the process of creating and maintaining assets.”

Provide a unified, single asset management platform:

“We chose AEM Assets because we were looking for one system for the entire company, whereas before, we had multiple systems and platforms to do the same job. We decided to unify everything, and that was the key starting point here.”

Enable marketing and ecommerce activities that rely on digital assets:

“We’re a very visual company in terms of our digital assets, and we needed something to really streamline our marketing team’s ability to manage, modify, and track the effectiveness of the assets that we’re using in our ecommerce and marketing platforms.”

Table 2 (next page) details study participants’ use of AEM Assets at the time of interviews. They reported supporting multiple brands (six on average) and geographical markets (54 on average), with an average of 1.59 million digital assets (median of 175,000). They reported that an average of 276 employees use AEM Assets on a day-to-day basis to maintain, access, and use digital assets to deliver enhanced digital experiences to other employees, customers, and business prospects. For additional information about study participants’ use of AEM Assets, please see **Table 2** (next page).

TABLE 2

AEM Assets Use by Interviewed Organizations

	Average	Median
Number of brands	6	3
Number of geographic markets	54	43
Number of languages	10	9
Number of digital assets in DAM system	1.59M	175,000
Number of internal users	276	175
Repository size, TBs	147	10

n = 8; Source: IDC Business Value In-Depth Interviews, March 2024

Business Value and Quantified Benefits of Adobe Experience Manager Assets

IDC’s research demonstrates how organizations can better use digital assets to foster higher revenue and operational efficiencies with AEM Assets while also reducing costs and staff time requirements associated with maintenance, support, and use of digital assets. With AEM Assets, they have a platform that provides broad and robust access to digital content and offers functionalities that allow for easier use of digital assets for marketing, development, sales, and other uses. For interviewed organizations, this enables their efforts to engage with customers, prospects, and other employees with digital content and assets, with significant resultant operational efficiencies and business gains.

Study participants spoke in detail about the most significant impact of their use of AEM Assets:

Ease of access and economies of scale:

“The number 1 benefit we’re striving to achieve with AEM Assets is to have a single source of truth for all assets to make sure that the right assets are available to everyone in the company. The second is economy of scale. We always want to make sure that people reuse rather than recreate.”

Integration with broader Adobe environments, image manipulation and delivery capabilities:

“Without a doubt, the most significant benefit of using AEM Assets is the full integration with the Adobe ecosystem and the full capability of manipulating image renditions, as well as the dynamic media and the speed to deliver those.”

Ability to quickly find and verify assets:

“The most significant benefit of AEM Assets is asset governance and the time to find an asset. With AEM Assets, our marketers can find an asset in under five minutes, and this used to take two to eight hours.”

Reduced risk and ability to identify through metadata:

“For us, the most significant benefit of AEM Assets is maintaining the correct images and making sure that we get rid of them when they are no longer viable. Also, the metadata is extremely important for our search engine optimization.”

Based on interviews with current AEM Assets customers, IDC calculates that they will realize benefits worth an annual average of \$9.04 million as they reduce costs associated with digital asset management and creation, save staff time related to asset management, spur productivity gains for line-of-business users, and capture higher revenue by better leveraging digital assets in support of business activities.

Business Benefits from Digital Assets

Importantly, study participants reported that the ability to easily manage, share, and use digital assets with AEM Assets has led to significant business gains. With AEM Assets, not only can they more readily create and deliver personalized marketing campaigns and digital services for customers, but they can move with greater speed to address potential customer demand. As a result, they can better ensure the overall quality and timeliness of the digital experiences upon which their sales and business operations increasingly rely. This leads not only to winning more new business opportunities but to delivering higher-quality services and products to existing customers, making them more likely to remain customers and increase their overall spending levels.

Interviewed Adobe customers provided examples of these types of business gains achieved with AEM Assets:

Efficient and effective marketing that leads to business gains:

“Before AEM Assets, we were happy with a conversion rate of 3%. Now, with AEM Assets, when we begin a marketing campaign, we see conversion rates of up to 35% because our marketing campaigns are so much more polished. This is the best example of how effective and polished marketing can significantly increase patient count and revenue.”

Marketing personalization, faster with marketing:

“One-quarter of our revenue gain through AEM Assets is due to better personalization because we operate in a global market and personalization is an important component of what we do ... We can also run better-targeted marketing campaigns, and our time to market is faster.”

As shown in **Table 3**, study participants connected significant revenue gains of an average of \$58.44 million per organization to their use of AEM Assets. This strong business impact reflects not only the incremental capabilities brought to the table by AEM Assets but also the increasing extent to which organizations rely on delivering unique and high-quality digital experiences to their customers, and it points to how AEM Assets ensures that they can do this.

TABLE 3
Business Enablement: Higher Revenue

	Per Organization	Per 100 Employees
Higher revenue per year	\$58.44M	\$238,200
Assumed operating margin	15%	15%
Higher net revenue per year	\$8.77M	\$35,700

n = 8; Source: IDC Business Value In-Depth Interviews, March 2024

In addition to business enablement, study participants reported that AEM Assets has helped them reduce risk associated with the use and distribution of digital assets. Specifically, having a more robust digital asset management platform with the ability to dynamically control rights and permissions reduces the risk of inadvertent use or release. One interviewed Adobe customer commented: *“We have a lot of proprietary content that needs approval to be released and is subject to compliance requirements. AEM Assets helps a lot with this — we used to make a lot of mistakes because we couldn’t control access. AEM Assets really helps with the rights and permissions.”* **Figure 1** (next page) shows the impact for study participants of using AEM Assets in terms of digital asset–related risk, with an average 52% reduction in the risk of improper use of out-of-date or unapproved assets and an average 27% reduction in the risk of accidental disclosure of assets.

FIGURE 1
Impact on Asset-Related Risk
 (Percent benefit with AEM Assets)



n = 8; Source: IDC Business Value In-Depth Interviews, March 2024

Lower Costs of Digital Assets

As study participants better locate, share, and use existing digital content and assets with AEM Assets, they also optimize costs related to digital asset creation. First, they provide better access to existing content and assets, which reduces the need for duplicative work. Second, they better link digital assets to campaigns and other use cases, minimizing the frequency with which digital assets are not used. One interviewed Adobe customer commented: *“With AEM Assets, we can make any kind of stock images available to everybody, so it’s one purchase. We reduce the duplication of each market purchasing or creating its own images by having a centralized repository.”* As shown in **Figure 2**, study participants reported reducing direct spend and time on creating duplicative assets by a strong 62% on average and on unused assets by an average of 40%.

FIGURE 2
Impact on Asset-Related Spend
 (Percent benefit with AEM Assets)



n = 8; Source: IDC Business Value In-Depth Interviews, March 2024

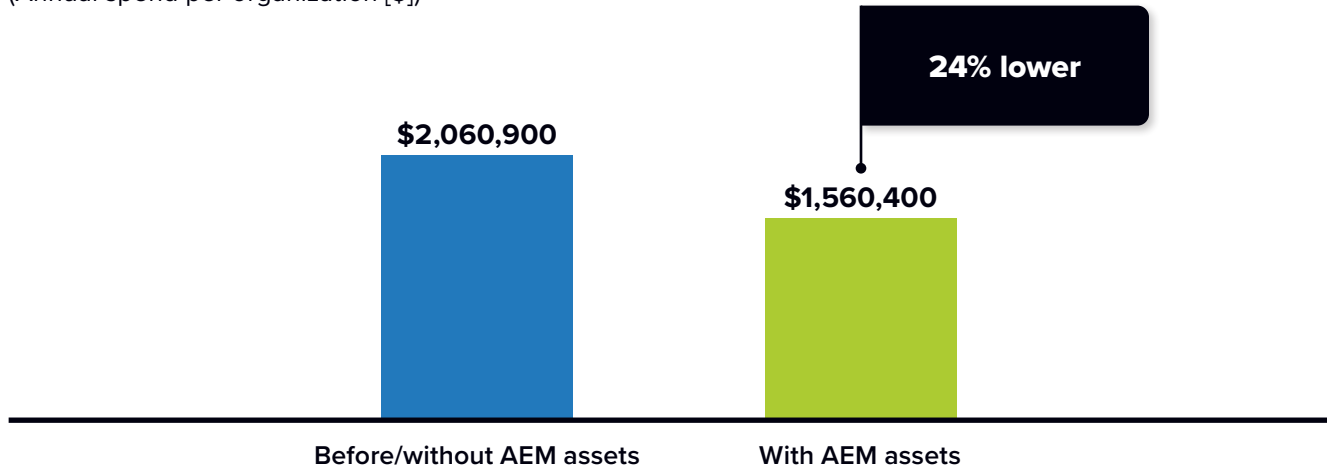
Study participants have also leveraged the enhanced functionality and capacity of AEM Assets to reduce their reliance on third-party agencies to create and manage digital assets.

As they have brought more of this work in house, IDC calculates that they have reduced direct spend on third-party agencies by an average of 24%, saving over \$500,000 per year per organization (see **Figure 3**).

FIGURE 3

Impact on Agency Spend

(Annual spend per organization [\$])



n = 8; Source: IDC Business Value In-Depth Interviews, March 2024

More Effective Use of Digital Assets

The ability to ensure robust and timely access with AEM Assets leads to more effective across-the-board use of digital assets for study participants. Compared with time-consuming efforts to find and identify the right digital asset, study participants can now provide direct access to well-ordered and updated digital asset repositories, lessening the burden on various groups of employees of finding these assets and ensuring that they have the right assets. As a result, employees can better leverage digital content and assets to do their jobs and deliver more timely and meaningful digital content to customers.

Interviewed Adobe customers provided examples of these types of gains with AEM Assets:

Ability to deliver meaningful and timely content to customers:

“We deliver more relevant and timely content for our customers with AEM Assets ... Customers are not impressed with old content, but now it’s meaningful and relevant.”

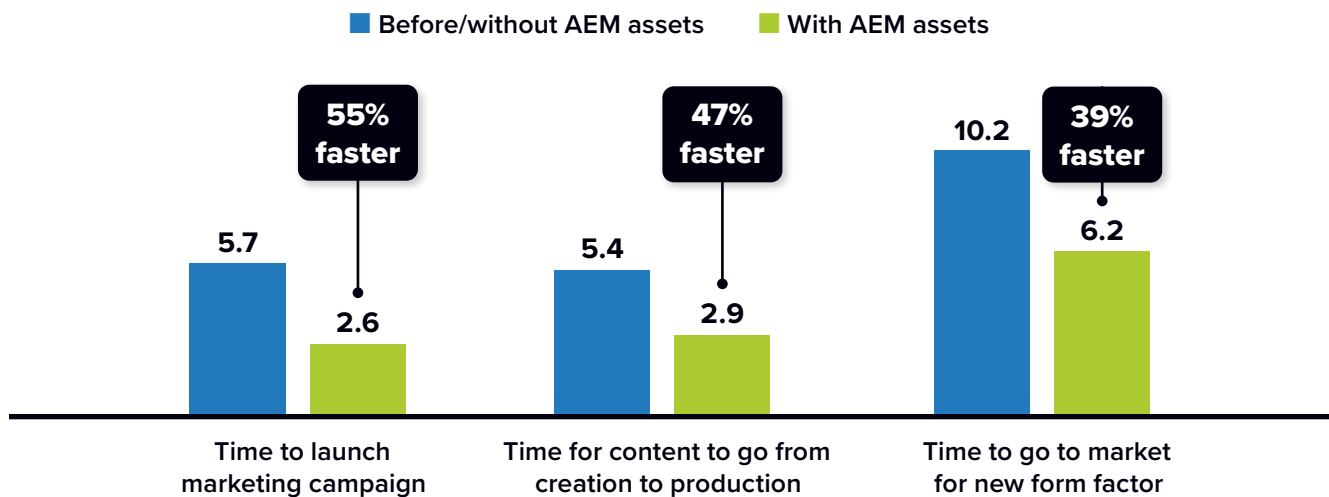
Universal access to digital assets to support branding campaigns:

“We’re proud of the asset share for every employee with AEM Assets ... Our talent is decentralized, so having one tool that everybody shares is nice. It helps us to push branding messages and updates.”

While various teams benefit from unencumbered access to rich digital assets, marketing teams stand as one of the teams most likely to benefit. They must continually find ways to craft messages and content that is meaningful, timely, and increasingly customized to specific prospects and customers. As such, the ability to locate and use digital assets assumes a high priority. One interviewed Adobe customer described the benefit for its marketing team of AEM Assets: *“Our marketing team can create rich, personalized content quicker with AEM Assets. Before AEM Assets, we wasted around 25% of all marketing-related assets because no one could find them.”*

Figure 4 shows the significant extent to which ease of access to and ability to create valuable new digital assets with AEM Assets enables marketing teams to better support business activities. Not only can they launch marketing campaigns significantly faster as digital assets progress rapidly from consideration to delivery (55% faster on average), but they can also move new digital content into production faster (47% faster on average) and customize content for use on new form factors more readily (39% faster on average). In each case, these efficiencies with AEM Assets translate into marketing teams completing core activities weeks faster on average, allowing their organizations to rely on timely, relevant, and more personalized marketing to support business efforts.

FIGURE 4
Impact on Marketing Activities
 (Number of weeks)



n = 8; Source: IDC Business Value In-Depth Interviews, March 2024
 For an accessible version of the data in this figure, see [Figure 4 Supplemental Data](#) in Appendix 3.

As one might expect, marketing teams are significantly more effective with AEM Assets; as their ability to speed up campaigns and deliver to more form factors improves, they deliver more value to their organizations (34% more productive on average). The benefits of robust and timely access to digital assets extend to various other teams that rely on such digital contact to do their jobs and engage with customers. Study participants reported significant efficiencies for teams ranging from sales teams (39% more productive) to website teams (35% more productive) to customer service teams (80% more productive). In each case, productivity benefits reflect these teams’ ability to better fulfill their core job responsibilities, as they can better access and use digital assets and content. Overall, IDC calculates that a range of line-of-business teams, noted below in **Table 4**, see higher productivity levels with AEM Assets, with IDC calculating an average 38% productivity gain across these teams, representing a significant gain in effectiveness and value for these teams.

TABLE 4
Impact on Productivity Levels, Teams Using Digital Assets

Productivity Impact, Average per Organization, Productivity Level in FTEs	Before/ Without AEM Assets	With AEM Assets	Difference	Benefit
Creative teams	8.8	12.3	3.5	40%
Marketing teams	30.8	41.3	10.5	34%
Website teams	5.9	7.9	2.1	35%
Development teams	4.2	6.3	2.0	48%
Sales, channel management teams	50.8	70.8	20.0	39%
Customer support teams	2.0	3.6	1.6	80%
Product/commerce teams	4.0	4.6	0.6	15%
Total productivity level, FTEs	106.4	146.7	40.3	38%
Annual value of productivity	\$7.45M	\$10.27M	\$2.82M	38%

n = 8; Source: IDC Business Value In-Depth Interviews, March 2024

Improved Asset Creation

For study participants, the benefits of using AEM Assets begin with greater ease of finding, sharing, and using digital assets. Interviewed Adobe customers reported that they struggled to provide cohesive and consistent access to digital assets prior to deploying AEM Assets. As a result, employees had insufficient visibility into already existing digital assets and how to access those assets. These inefficiencies created friction and duplicative work and ultimately hampered efforts to use existing digital assets, whether for creating new digital content, for producing asset renditions, or for reusing digital assets.

Study participants unanimously reported that AEM Assets positively impacts their ability to efficiently access and use existing digital content and assets. AEM Assets has allowed them to break down silos that prevented accessing, sharing, and effectively using digital assets. In turn, this allows teams that create digital content to understand more readily what already exists and what they can repurpose. As a result, they can deliver digital content as their businesses require in a more timely and seamless fashion.

Interviewed AEM Assets customers detailed how they have achieved these improvements:

Faster content delivery, better understanding of right format:

“We benefit from the speed of content delivery with AEM Assets and the versatility of the system to see which device or what type of connection you need to deliver the right asset rendition. That flexibility helps the overall faster delivery. One of the best things is having one central repository and not needing to create multiple variations for those assets.”

Elimination of friction associated with searching for digital assets:

“End users work 20%–30% faster with AEM Assets because they can see assets that they have rights to use, so they’re not searching ... It’s almost exponentially faster than having to look on the desktop and make sure that you get the right assets you have rights to use and that you have the latest version.”

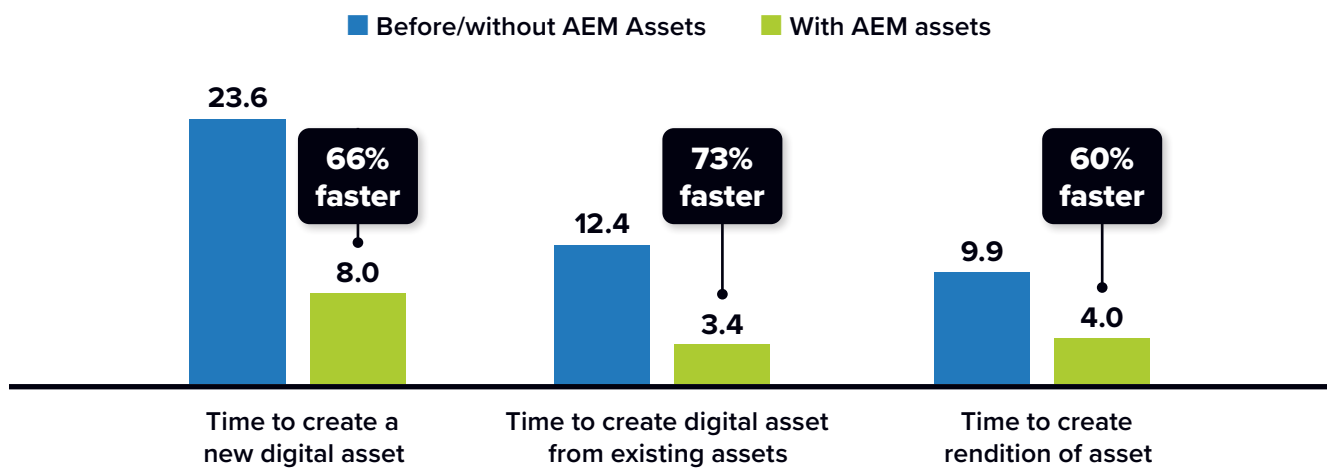
Strong functionality for renditions and variations of assets:

“Efficiency in managing digital assets with AEM Assets is all about the functionality for new renditions and variations of the assets. We now have a lot less back-and-forth on changing the actual assets for different places based on where they will be used — we’re saving around 30%–35% of staff time.”

Fundamentally, AEM Assets allows for easier identification and location of digital assets. On average, study participants reported that they can find existing digital assets 77% faster, going from needing an average of 1.7 hours to needing an average of 0.4 hours to find and download an asset. This means that employees spend far less time trying to locate digital assets and are much more likely to successfully identify and locate the right digital assets for their purposes.

As shown in **Figure 5**, this ability to find and obtain digital assets has a significant enabling effect on overall efforts to create digital assets. Study participants now require significantly less staff time to create digital assets with AEM Assets, whether net new, new version, or renditions of existing digital assets. Reported efficiencies range from requiring 66% less staff time to create a completely new digital asset to requiring 73% less staff time to create a digital asset from existing assets and requiring 60% less staff time to create asset renditions. These efficiencies represent significant gains in study participants' ability to move quickly and with purpose to deliver digital assets as their businesses require.

FIGURE 5
Efficiencies in Digital Asset Creation and Use
 (Number of staff hours)



n = 8; Source: IDC Business Value In-Depth Interviews, March 2024
 For an accessible version of the data in this figure, see [Figure 5 Supplemental Data](#) in Appendix 3.

More Efficient Digital Asset Management

Study participants reported that AEM Assets provides a more efficient platform for maintaining and managing their digital assets. They previously struggled to optimize the management of substantial digital asset libraries with disparate and unintegrated systems and repositories. As a result, line-of-business users often had to take responsibility for managing their own digital assets, which not only was inefficient for these LOB users but also prevented them from providing ready and logical access to these digital assets to other employees.

Interviewed organizations spoke about the fundamental value of AEM Assets in having a unified and integrated digital asset management platform. Further, they cited strong functionalities of AEM Assets such as robust tagging and metadata capabilities that enable them to better classify, order, and identify digital assets. As a result, they have established more effective and streamlined digital asset management systems with AEM Assets that require less staff time to maintain and support.

Interviewed customers provided specific examples of how AEM Assets serves as an efficient cloud-based digital asset management platform:

Tagging and metadata capabilities:

“We are seeing 60%–70% efficiencies around tagging and metadata management with AEM Assets. We used to have a lot of people taking care of metadata, and we’re down to a much more consolidated team now.”

Foundation for rationalized and efficient digital asset management:

“Before using AEM Assets, we didn’t have a digital asset management team, but our employees individually managed their own assets. They were probably spending 15% of their time on average doing this.”

Table 5 provides IDC’s findings on staff time required for maintaining and supporting digital assets. As shown, study participants reported that they require 53% less staff time for equivalent volumes of digital assets, which saves the time of an equivalent of 7.1 FTEs.

TABLE 5
Digital Asset Management Team Efficiencies

Average per Organization	Before/ Without AEM Assets	With AEM Assets	Difference	Benefit
Equivalent FTEs required for same workloads	13.5	6.3	7.1	53%
Value of equivalent staff time, \$ per year	\$943,600	\$443,500	\$500,100	53%

n = 8; Source: IDC Business Value In-Depth Interviews, March 2024

Table 6 provides more granular detail on how AEM Assets drives these asset management–related efficiencies. Efficiencies in tagging assets figures most prominently, with AEM Assets’ strong tagging functionalities enabling average efficiencies of 58% in tagging activities, saving an average of 350 hours of staff time per week. Likewise, efficiencies in cropping, editing, and rendering digital assets (44% on average) and distributing digital assets (38%) also demonstrate how AEM Assets has enabled study participants to establish more connected and accessible repositories for varied digital assets.

TABLE 6
Digital Asset Support Efficiencies

Efficiencies, Overall Staff Hours per Week	Before/ Without AEM Assets	With AEM Assets	Difference	Benefit
Tagging assets	517	167	350	58%
Cropping/editing/rendering assets	145	82	63	44%
Distributing assets	132	82	50	38%

n = 8; Source: IDC Business Value In-Depth Interviews, March 2024

Cost and Operational Benefits of Cloud Services

Study participants also valued their ability with AEM Assets to establish cost-effective and efficient cloud-based digital asset management platforms. With AEM Assets, not only have they consolidated on a single platform that they can scale as needed, but they benefit from access to support and expertise from Adobe.

Interviewed Adobe customers provided a number of examples of how they are gaining from lower total costs of operations that ultimately positively affect their ability to derive broader value from their digital asset ecosystems:

Lower costs, faster innovation cycles:

“We have reduced our operating costs by 30% by moving from on premises for AEM Assets and AEM Sites to the cloud. Adobe takes care of all the heavy lifting and rolling out of features. We don’t have to pay an agency to code or develop anything. We want everything to be out of the box and as standard as possible to keep costs down and be able to innovate faster.”

Cost of operations, staff support time:

“The benefit of using AEM Assets as a cloud service is mostly about the cost of operations. The good thing with it as a cloud service is that we need fewer people who take care of the platform on our side. We’ve done that with the network already, and we’re also using the account manager, CI/CD, and so on ... We reduced the staff time required by 50%.”

Operational efficiencies help bottom line:

“AEM Assets in the cloud provides operational efficiency. If we do things faster, better, and maybe cheaper if we use fewer resources, at the end of the day, it helps the bottom line.”

ROI Summary

Table 7 provides IDC’s analysis of the benefits and investment costs related to study participants’ use of AEM Assets. Over three years, IDC calculates that they will realize discounted benefits worth an average of \$21.39 million (\$1.35 million per 100,000 digital assets, \$87,200 per 100 employees) in DAM team efficiencies, lower asset-related creation costs, increased employee productivity, and higher net revenue. These benefits compare with three-year discounted investment costs of an average of \$2.21 million per organization (\$139,000 per 100,000 digital assets, \$9,000 per 100 employees), which yields an average three-year ROI of 868%. This strong return on investment, coupled with study participants’ ability to deploy and implement AEM Assets in an average of 4.2 months, means that they reach breakeven on their investment in a relatively short five months on average.

TABLE 7
Three-Year ROI Analysis

	Per Organization	Per 100,000 Digital Assets	Per 100 Employees
Benefit (discounted)	\$21.39M	\$1.35M	\$87,200
Investment (discounted)	\$2.21M	\$139,000	\$9,000
Net present value (NPV)	\$19.18M	\$1.21M	\$78,200
ROI (NPV/investment)	868%	868%	868%
Payback	5 months	5 months	5 months
Discount factor	12%	12%	12%

n = 8; Source: IDC Business Value In-Depth Interviews, March 2024

Challenges/Opportunities

Marketers struggle to create fresh content fast enough with limited budgets. Digital asset management systems solve this by streamlining content creation, sharing, and distribution. Adobe is well positioned to assist teams to reuse existing assets, eliminate duplicate creation efforts, and automate workflows, saving time and money. AEM Assets as a central hub for digital assets ensures brand consistency and faster campaign launches, maximizing the ROI of marketing's content strategy.

Adobe is well established in the enterprise market, addressing some of the most complex uses of digital assets. Adobe is the largest vendor in the digital asset management market today and enjoys several advantages. In addition to its global footprint and large partner channel, Adobe has integrated AEM Assets with Adobe Creative Cloud and several of the solutions in the Adobe portfolio. One challenge that Adobe faces is in implementing the application of those solutions to smaller or less mature organizations that need a repository. There exists a set of competitive solutions in the market for these customers who need a simple repository. Adapting AEM Assets to meet the specific needs and budgets of less mature or smaller customers while still providing a comprehensive set of functionalities can be complex.

The emergence of GenAI is a game changer in addressing the exponential growth of content consumption. Adobe Firefly's tie to AEM Assets will help to accelerate organizations of all sizes and digital maturities along their DAM journeys. Once again, Adobe must remain cognizant of the pricing pressures associated with these more robust tools and continue to refine their offerings to better align with the needs of the customers on a journey to implement a DAM system to solve their rich media content supply chain problems.

Conclusion

The ability to effectively manage the growing number of digital assets within the organization presents a competitive advantage to B2B and B2C organizations alike. Digital asset management systems have become essential for organizations aiming to provide a single source of truth for digital assets, including images, videos, and documents. This centralization is crucial for enhancing brand consistency, optimizing content workflows, and maximizing the return on investment from digital assets. DAM systems meet modern content and marketing teams' needs by enabling improved collaboration, content reuse, and risk mitigation, particularly in legal compliance and digital rights management.

Adobe Experience Manager Assets exemplifies a robust DAM solution, streamlining asset management and activation. It supports global enterprises, with features such as intelligent workflow automation, dynamic media capabilities, and integration with the Adobe suite enabling organizations to achieve an annual average benefit of \$9.04 million. Companies leveraging AEM Assets also reported significant benefits from increased conversions, revenue, and operational efficiencies while reducing costs and enhancing productivity across teams. Adobe's DAM offering also enables organizations to easily implement dynamic media and advanced content distribution via composable services, ensuring broader and more efficient use of digital assets across the entire ecosystem of teams needing access to digital assets. The tangible value that Adobe AEM Assets customers realized is a key data point that underscores the critical role of DAM systems in today's digital landscape. With its strong ROI and quick breakeven point, AEM Assets represents a transformative solution for managing digital assets in today's content-driven business landscape.

Appendix 1: Methodology

IDC's standard Business Value/ROI methodology was utilized for this project. This methodology is based on gathering data from organizations currently using Adobe Experience Manager Assets as their primary digital asset management platform.

Based on interviews with organizations using AEM Assets, IDC performed a three-step process to calculate the ROI and payback period:

- 1. Gathered quantitative benefit information during the interviews using a before-and-after assessment of the impact of using AEM Assets.** In this study, the benefits included DAM- and asset-related cost savings, IT staff efficiencies, user productivity gains, and higher revenue.
- 2. Created a complete investment (three-year total cost analysis) profile based on the interviews.** Investments go beyond the initial and annual costs of using AEM Assets and can include additional costs related to migrations, planning, consulting, and staff or user training.
- 3. Calculated the ROI and payback period.** IDC conducted a depreciated cash flow analysis of the benefits and investments for the organizations' use of AEM Assets over a three-year period. ROI is the ratio of the net present value and the discounted investment. The payback period is the point at which cumulative benefits equal the initial investment.

IDC bases the payback period and ROI calculations on a number of assumptions, which are summarized as follows:

- Time values are multiplied by burdened salary (salary + 28% for benefits and overhead) to quantify efficiency and manager productivity savings. For the purposes of this analysis, based on the geographic locations of the interviewed organizations, IDC has used assumptions of an average fully loaded salary of \$100,000 per year for IT staff members and an average fully loaded salary of \$70,000 per year for non-IT staff members. IDC assumes that employees work 1,880 hours per year (47 weeks x 40 hours).
- The net present value of the three-year savings is calculated by subtracting the amount that would have been realized by investing the original sum in an instrument yielding a 12% return to allow for the missed opportunity cost. This accounts for both the assumed cost of money and the assumed rate of return.
- Because IT solutions require a deployment period, the full benefits of the solution are not available during deployment. To capture this reality, IDC prorates the benefits on a monthly basis and then subtracts the deployment time from the first-year savings.

All dollar numbers in this White Paper are in U.S. dollars.

Appendix 2: Quantified Benefits of Use of Adobe Experience Manager Assets

Table 8 provides specifics about the ways in which study participants reported achieving value through their use of AEM Assets. On average, IDC calculates that they will achieve total annual benefits worth an average of \$9.04 million, as shown below.

TABLE 8
Specific Calculations: Benefits from Use of AEM Assets

Category of Value	Average Quantitative Benefit	15% Margin Assumption Applied	Calculated Average Annual Value*
Agency spend savings	24% lower spending, saving \$500,500/year	No	\$441,900
IT team management efficiencies	35% efficiency, 0.5 FTEs, \$100,000 salary	No	\$47,100
DAM team efficiencies	53% efficiency, 7.1 FTEs, \$70,000 salary	No	\$441,600
Creative team productivity gains	40% productivity gain, 3.5 FTEs, \$70,000 salary	Yes	\$32,600
Marketing team productivity gains	34% productivity gain, 10.5 FTEs, \$70,000 salary	Yes	\$97,500
Website team productivity gains	35% productivity gain, 2.1 FTEs, \$70,000 salary	Yes	\$19,100
Development team productivity gains	48% productivity gain, 2.0 FTEs, \$70,000 salary	Yes	\$18,900

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Category of Value	Average Quantitative Benefit	15% Margin Assumption Applied	Calculated Average Annual Value*
Sales team productivity gains	39% productivity gain, 20.0 FTEs, \$70,000 salary	Yes	\$185,300
Customer support team productivity gains	80% productivity gain, 1.6 FTEs, \$70,000 salary	Yes	\$14,800
Product/commerce team productivity gains	15% productivity gain, 0.6 FTEs, \$70,000 salary	Yes	\$5,600
Higher net revenue	\$58.44M higher revenue	Yes	\$7.74M
Total annual benefits, use of Adobe Experience Manager Assets	\$9.04M per organization		

*includes 4.2 months' deployment time in year 1
n = 8; Source: IDC Business Value In-Depth Interviews, March 2024

Note: All numbers in this document may not be exact due to rounding.

Appendix 3: Supplemental Data

This appendix provides an accessible version of the data for the complex figures in this document. Click “Return to original figure” below each table to get back to the original data figure.

FIGURE 4 SUPPLEMENTAL DATA

Impact on Marketing Activities

	Time to Launch Marketing Campaign	Time for Content to Go from Creation to Production	Time to Go to Market for New Form Factor
Before/without AEM Assets	5.7 weeks	5.4 weeks	10.2 weeks
With AEM Assets	2.6 weeks	2.9 weeks	6.2 weeks
Difference	55% faster	47% faster	39% faster

n = 8; Source: IDC Business Value In-Depth Interviews, March 2024

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FIGURE 5 SUPPLEMENTAL DATA

Efficiencies in Digital Asset Creation and Use

	Time to Create a New Digital Asset	Time to Create Digital Asset from Existing Assets	Time to Create Rendition of Asset
Before/without AEM Assets	23.6 hours	12.4 hours	9.9 hours
With AEM Assets	8.0 hours	3.4 hours	4.0 hours
Difference	66% faster	73% faster	60% faster

n = 8; Source: IDC Business Value In-Depth Interviews, March 2024

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About the IDC Analysts



Marci Maddox

Research Vice President, Digital Experience Strategies

Marci Maddox is Research Vice President for IDC's Digital Experience Management Software program, responsible for research related to content and media assets that drive relevant, personalized, and engaging digital experiences research. Marci's core research coverage includes creative tools, web content management systems, customer communications, digital asset management and video platform solutions. Leveraging 18 years in content and experience applications, Marci analyzes the impact that new technology entrants such as AI and mobile have on the way organizations create and deliver persuasive content to improve customer lifetime value and user interaction. She conducts research on a worldwide scale, including market sizing and forecasting, ROI models, case studies, multiclient studies, and thought leadership projects.

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Matthew is responsible for carrying out custom business value research engagements and consulting projects for clients in a number of technology areas with a focus on determining the return on investment of their use of enterprise technologies. Matthew's research often analyzes how organizations are leveraging investment in digital technology solutions and initiatives to create value through efficiencies and business enablement.

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