

A photograph of a busy city street, likely Times Square in New York City, with the Empire State Building visible in the background. The street is filled with pedestrians, and various storefronts and signs are visible. The sky is overcast.

Brand Management Software. **A Buyer's Guide.**

Introduction.

Organizations the world over invest heavily in their brand. They recognize that it is their most valuable asset and influences how their customers perceive them in the market.

Branding is linked directly to the bottom-line performance of every company in business today. It is bigger than a marketing line item cost. It is the lifeblood of your company - one of the key pillars of your company's success and at the very center of the strategies you put in place to be **more** successful.



Branding achieves 5 important things:

1. It attracts the right customers to your product/service.

With good research, you can pinpoint the best customers for your business – the ones that 'get' your culture and what you stand for. This will enable you to crystallize customer personas that shape the messages you deliver into market to reach the best customers. And it is these customers that will be loyal to your brand, who will become fans of your brand that will influence the opinions of others and steer them your way.

2. It helps you achieve pricing goals for your product/services.

You know what they say, people don't buy products, they buy brands – and they're willing to pay good money for the brand that 'speaks to them'. The harder your brand works, the easier it is to reach a premium price for the products/services within it.

3. It helps you close sales.

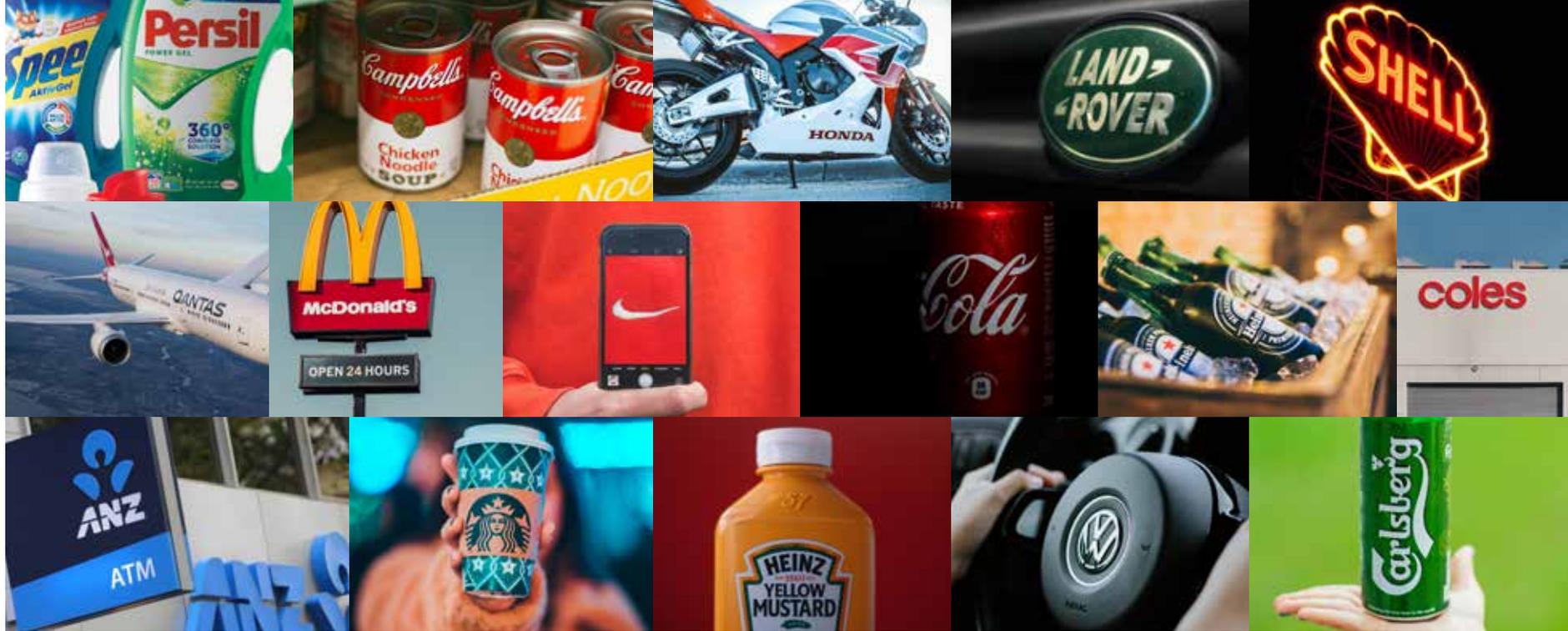
The better defined your brand, the easier it is to reach a sale position. In fact, your brand can do almost all the heavy lifting for your salespeople if it's strong enough. So really all they're doing is turning up to close the deal. A well known brand provides familiarity and certainty.

4. It reduces the cost of marketing.

When branding is weak, marketing efforts tend to be like firing a shotgun into the sky hoping to hit something. With a strong brand, marketing is tighter. More focused. You take less shots to hit the target. Simple.

5. It boosts your organization's overall value.

The share price of your company is inextricably linked to the perception of your brand in the marketplace. In other words, the branding investment you've made over many years is precisely the investment that prospective investors will be making.



Protecting your Brand.

Given the key importance of the brand in setting your organization apart from competitors and establishing your position in the market, you need to put in place systems and procedures that protect it. Obviously there is the outward facing legal interpretation of 'protection' – such as trademarking and registration. **But there's the equally vital task of protecting the 'essence' of your brand** – the way it looks and feels in your communications material (your visual identity) together with the tone you take. Setting and maintaining your brand guidelines will establish a strong reputation with your

customers and it will cement the foundations of your brand over the long term.

This all sounds great, but the reality is that it's a huge challenge to police your brand application out there in the world – and that challenge is magnified the bigger your sales/marketing network is. Spare a thought for all the Global Chief Marketing Officers out there that are faced with the monumental task of rolling out marketing campaigns across the globe. They sit watching, hoping that the integrity of the campaign is preserved in all the far-flung markets around the world.

More recently, technology has stepped in to assist marketers who spend large chunks of their working lives protecting their brand.

This technology is called **Brand Management Software** – it not only safeguards the significant investment you have made in your brand, it:

- **Frees up enormous time for marketing teams,**
- **Improves productivity,**
- **Empowers your sales and marketing network with smart content creation capabilities,**
- **Manages and stores your growing bank of digital assets**
- **Shares marketing plans with the entire team.**

What good Brand Management Software looks like.

This is an emerging industry and there are several different Brand Management platforms out there - but there are key elements that make some better than others.

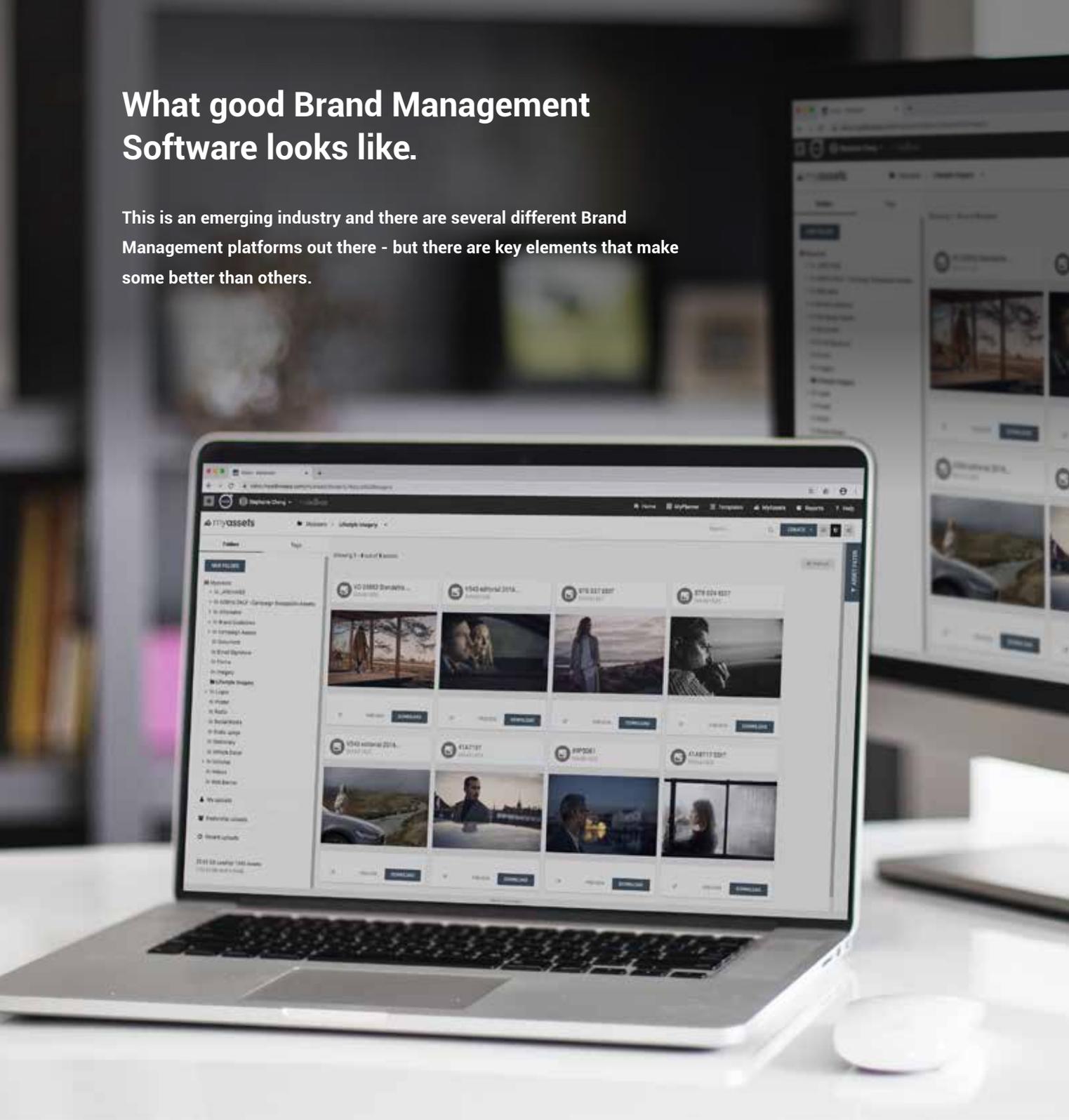
The basics of good Brand Management Software:

1. Assets. Sorted.

Brand Management Software must incorporate a robust, powerful **Digital Asset Management (DAM) Platform**. With the right DAM, brands are able to completely organize and distribute media files in a centralized portal. Within this platform, they can deliver and control which assets are downloaded and used within their network. Application of imagery is controlled, sharing of files is monitored, and approval workflows are established to ensure assets are applied correctly across all advertising and communication collateral.

Good DAMs allow asset version control, metadata tagging for search functionality and sorting, Rights Management permission, expiration and activation controls, archiving procedures and more.

Apart from the benefits of storing, controlling and distributing your assets in one platform, there is also the enormous time savings achieved with a good DAM. Studies have shown¹ that without a DAM, nearly 20% of a marketing team's time is lost in the hunt for digital assets and the endless back and forth with network users around which assets they can access and use. That's a lot of wasted time if you extrapolate that number across your marketing team.





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2. Content creation. Streamlined.

The other cornerstone element of Brand Management Software is a **Dynamic Content Creation (DCC) platform (sometimes referred to as an Automated Ad Production system)**.

This software seamlessly communicates with your DAM and together they can replace the expensive, time consuming advertising agency production model that has eroded your marketing budget every month since you appointed them. No – you're not completely replacing your ad agency. You'll still need them for creative work, but it's the production of those ideas (ie creating the many variations to meet different media requirements - a costly, time consuming, error ridden process) that you can now automate to save time and money. Think of DCCs as 'content creation engines' – they take the approved ad agency concepts and

roll these ad campaigns into editable, brand compliant templates that are accessible via a user-friendly interface to approved users in a network. Users are then able to browse the templates (including press advertisements, digital ads, television, video, point of sale – even Social media) to create their own, on-brand content in a few seconds (rather than the hours/days an agency takes).

The beauty of this system is that the DCC meshes perfectly with the DAM, enabling users to switch out imagery/logos/video assets into these templates at will to craft content that suits their needs. And because all the templates and all the assets are 100% brand compliant, the content created by users doesn't require an exhaustive approval process, saving huge amounts of time and frustration – not to mention cost. Importantly, the DCC will

also incorporate in-built workflow approval processes that can be implemented from a macro brand level right down to a Local Area Marketing level. This gives brands complete control and visibility on how advertising is working (or not working) against sales results and provides them with real-time intelligence to adjust accordingly.

For the head office marketing team that spends a significant chunk of their week creating, modifying and approving content for the brand media schedules and or the network (be it regional or local), systems like this completely change their working lives. Apart from the huge time and costs savings – the platform ensures that local marketing teams are creating content that is 100% on brand, 100% of the time, considerably reducing the angst and potential conflicts within organizations.



3. Plans. Shared.

Good Brand Management Software suites will also incorporate smart tech that modernizes the sharing of information and optimizes time. Brand Management Software with inbuilt planning functionality gives all your teams visibility around the marketing plans for the year, aligning efforts and ensuring gaps in the communications schedule are covered (and importantly, that efforts aren't unnecessarily 'doubled up' during the year).

Smart planning and scheduling software can also trigger the production of content at the touch of a button into the DCC platform that can execute the schedule into all the different kinds of media required. This saves considerable time that would normally have been taken in briefing a production team (ad agency or internal design team) together with the associated approvals requirements and rounds of author's corrections.

The shopping list



How to choose Brand Management Software for your company.

First – expect the landscape to be confusing.

Comparing apples with apples is not simple.

There are so many different types of software to choose from and not all solutions will comprehensively cover your requirements. For instance, there are plenty of stand-alone DAMs that do very good jobs of organizing assets, but can't help you create the content you need to get out there into market. On the other hand, there are DCCs out there that can create content for you and your team, but they don't offer an integrated DAM solution and require third party APIs to work with a separate DAM. Even worse - the DCCs are using integrated 3rd party software which creates a compliance and data security risk. ***This is far from ideal.*** You also need to be careful when choosing a DCC as some of them don't cater for video production – and that's where Social media advertising is heading big time.

To help you choose the right Brand Management Software suite, we've compiled the following shopping list of advice:



1. Get a DAM and a DCC from the one supplier.

Yes, it can work if you have your own DAM and you buy a DCC that can plug in (with a bit of help from your IT team). And sure, you could go and buy a DAM from one supplier and a DCC from another supplier. But either way, you're relying on software that wasn't built to work seamlessly together and you'll need APIs to get them to talk - which will cost more from the outset and will cost extra to maintain. **The best way is to choose a supplier that has designed and created a great DAM and a great DCC to work together as one.** It will make things much, much easier for your IT people (who don't want unnecessary technical headaches), for your marketing people (who want a solution that helps them from day one), for all your users (who just want to get a system that works seamlessly) and for your CFO/Procurement Officer (who only has to do one deal, not two).



2. Make sure the DAM can:

a) Support all file types. We're talking all shapes. All sizes. All formats. Video and stills. HTML and InDesign files. No exceptions.

b) Handle drag and drop bulk and individual asset upload. Otherwise you'll spend forever getting your assets into the cloud.

c) Ensure secure storage and secure backup. Amazon S3 Servers that are scalable and constantly back up your files with version control – SSO through SAML – Public and Private brand folders – SSL certificates - settle for nothing less. And if you need your files 'in country' for compliance reasons, make sure your DAM can handle preferred data domiciles.

d) Support a multi-tiered folder and visual structure. For ease of asset organization

e) Filter by any metadata attached to the asset. It gets your users to the asset they want faster and takes care of Rights Management issues.

f) Support sophisticated sorting and searching. Digital asset catalogs are exploding for all companies. If you can't sort and search with clarity, you'll waste huge amounts of time.

g) Incorporate controlled user privileges and download workflows. Set your approval and workflow processes in the right direction from the start and you won't look back.

h) Be White-labelled. It will make things much easier if your users log in and the DAM looks like your organization's system, with your logos, your typeface, your design.

i) Offer analytics/reporting functionality. You want to be able to see which assets have been accessed by whom, for what, for where, when. Seeing more is knowing more.

j) Handle Rights Management controls. You don't want nasty surprises if assets are used incorrectly.

k) Offer asset usage approval workflows. You need to be able to set parameters for all users within the system.

l) Optimise your asset use. This includes filtering beyond metadata, enabling embargo/go live dates and expiry options on images, inclusion of T&Cs, cross-linking to other assets, sharing protocols, enabling output types and reporting on asset use.



3. Make sure the DCC can:

- a) Create content for any kind of media with limitless customization.** Print, Press, Point of Sale, Digital, Television, Video, Outdoor, Social. It must be able to do it all and it must be able to output files in any format (for example, video needs to be able to be output into a myriad of video formats including .mp4, .mov and ProRes files). Limitless customization provides you the opportunity to personalize to your heart's content.
- b) Work natively with InDesign and HTML files.** That's how your agency executes their creative layouts. Some DCCs don't work with InDesign - only with HTML, which means having to recreate the work (which is effectively double handling) and requires another layer of approvals at your end. A good platform will capably accommodate both InDesign and HTML input files.
- c) Store campaigns and manage launch/expiry dates.** Templates need to be able to be searched by all the elements including assets, media, location and user/creator. Your DCC should also be able to accommodate 'go live'

dates for campaigns plus campaign expiry.

- d) Provide simple output in any format.** Video/static/online/POS – you name it.
- e) Sort campaigns using multi-tiered and visual folder structure.** Just as you would if you were organizing your computer desktop. You should also be able to search and sort through third party stock photography libraries to widen the availability of images for users.
- f) Filter by tag or metadata.** This helps you find your content faster in an ever-expanding library of content you're creating.
- g) Provide multi-tiered workflows.** Important where there are many users at different levels of seniority in your content ecosystem. Particularly important with customization and also useful for approvals processes. These workflows should also flow down to individual pieces of content - in other words, different workflows for different content as required.
- h) Be White-labeled.** Makes all your users comfortable when they log in and the DCC looks like your system, with your logos, your typeface, your design.
- i) Ensure bullet-proof security.** Storage on Amazon S3 Servers, GDPR compliance, Country Selective storage, SSO through SAML, Public

and Private brand folders, SSL Certificates.

- j) Streamline Workflows.** Auto saving is critical for users that are busy and multi-tasking, as is multiple dispatch options to the array of media outlets you choose.
- h) Offer powerful analytical tools.** You need the ability to see everything that happens on the platform – user activity, content created, media selected. Right down to the most granular detail.
- i) Create content in any language.** This is particularly relevant for Global customers who need to have content produced in multiple languages and character sets to suit specific markets around the world.
- j) Offer a WIP tool.** Keeps everyone on the same page. Sharing information is powerful.
- k) Provide full visibility of access.** Because seeing who is making what content, where and when, gives you the power to optimize how you use the system.
- l) Cater for API integration.** This gives you flexibility to get the system working seamlessly with any internal marketing software you currently rely on.



4. A leading Brand Management Software supplier will have:

a) A local Support team. Your network will need help with logins and ad-hoc assistance in creating content. You need a locally based support team that are experts in the system and can solve any problem on the fly. Brand Management Software platforms are going to trigger a new workflow pattern and migrating to this new workflow requires support that helps all users become acclimatized.

b) A bullet-proof onboarding plan. Don't underestimate the importance of onboarding. It all starts with content and media channel audits, pre-launch and launch communications, user training (including a range of training modules that can be carried out in face-to-face training groups or as 'webinar' sessions for networks that are geographically diverse) refresher courses and IT synchronicity. Good onboarding piques the interest of the network users before launch to get as many of your network on board early when you launch.

And a good onboarding plan will identify the appropriate level of customizable content you will need to inject into the system from day 1 to win the users over.

c) A formal, proven Network Engagement plan.

This is a vital long-term strategy that corrects user inactivity over time and ensures all users are up to speed with all the elements of your chosen platform's functionality.

d) A clear pricing plan. There's nothing worse than finding out that the price you were quoted is not the final price. Make sure your supplier provides you with a clear quote that clearly maps out the cost components. Good Brand Management Software suppliers will have a pricing model to suit clients across the board, making the platform accessible for small organizations and cost-effective across the larger networks.

e) Their own software development strategy.

Ideally they'll have their own roadmap for improving their system together with in-house developers that are committed to software excellence.

f) Thorough security in place for your data.

Ask the hard questions around where your data

is stored, how often it's backed up and what security standards are in place. And are they GDPR compliant?

g) The systems to get you to market fast if required.

If speed to market and a fast retail cycle is important for you, make sure you partner with a Brand Management Software provider that can match the required retail pace and has a proven track record of doing so. Remember that you're choosing Brand Management Software because it is quicker to market – the last thing you want is a platform and a team that can't deliver.

h) The ability to work with your ad agency partners.

After all, your ad agency still has an important role to play in developing concepts - and it is vital that there is a strong relationship with these agencies to ensure the smooth and timely delivery of concept layouts to your Brand Management Software provider.

i) A proven track record. Choosing a system that is already being used by companies across a range of industries (preferably in different countries to demonstrate support capability) is the ultimate vote of confidence.



Getting Brand Management Software ready. What **you** need to do:

a) Ensure the need. It might sound a little obvious, but to get the best out of a Brand Management Software, you actually need to have the need for one. If you don't really need one, it won't get used and you'll be paying for the privilege. Ensure your provider can help assess your current and future requirements and make sure Brand Management Software fits your business model.

b) Do a cost analysis. Run the numbers of content production costs from your ad agency against those using Brand Management Software. It's a compelling story for your CFO.

b) Review/audit material and output requirements/media channels. This one is critical because it's about the quality of the input and the accuracy of the output. A review/audit should be placed at the center of the onboarding process. Ideally, you will conduct this audit with your new supplier.

c) Consider the future content you'll need. An important consideration because the media landscape is constantly changing with greater reliance on digital and social media. This directly

impacts on the strategy of your content mix into the future.

d) Get buy-in from key stakeholders. It goes without saying that you need your Executive and Marketing teams on board from day one, driving the important messages home about the virtues of Brand Automation. But there will be other key people in your organization's network who will influence the success of the platform. Your provider must work with you to identify these key people and help develop communication programs that get the buy-in required to make the platform a success.

e) Educate users on the change in workflow to come. A vital part of the early stages of introducing the Brand Automation concept is to communicate how things will change. Different teams require different encouragement and communication around workflow change.

f) Consider running a Pilot program. Choose a Brand Management Software provider who is prepared to run the platform in a test market with users that you know will put the system through its paces.



g) Put a value against time savings. Time lost in traditional content creation (the ad agency production model) is mammoth. By placing a value on the time saved, you're attributing definable bottom line gains to the cost benefit analysis of acquiring the best possible Brand Automation platform. Your Brand Automation Provider should be able to help you ascertain this value equation.

h) Consider the IT requirements – GDPR, DAM integration, APIs and SSLs. Get your IT team involved and involved early. Smooth integration with your Brand Management platform is central to its success in getting off the ground - your Brand Management Software provider needs to ensure their Development team is on hand to ensure smooth integration of the platform with any system.

i) Project Manager/point person. A great idea is to have someone at your end – probably from deep within the marketing team – driving the project forward and ensuring deadlines are met. Make sure that your platform provider has Project Managers that partner with your point person to hit all the right on-boarding timelines.

Next steps.



References:

1. www.mckinsey.com/industries/technology-media-and-telecommunications/our-insights/the-social-economy

This Buyer's Guide is designed to compare and contrast a shortlist of Brand Management Software suppliers in an emerging industry which is having a huge impact on marketing and advertising worldwide.

Given the fast-moving nature of the industry and the complexities involved, you will need to engage a range of internal stakeholders with this Buyer's Guide including:

- **Key members of your marketing team**
- **Representatives from your sales network**
- **CFO**
- **Procurement Officer**
- **IT Manager.**



If you need more information on Brand Management Software, contact abaker@myadbox.com or visit myadbox.com