

A White Paper on
Local Area Marketing.
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How to make your LAM Platform a soaring success.



Local Area Marketing (LAM) is alive and well. It is one of the most important components of the marketing puzzle for large, national and global businesses today. Compared to macro marketing approaches, successful LAM strategies employ different techniques and methods in order to reach, engage and attract local people. These days, smart marketers are factoring in LAM needs within their plans to maximize the impact of their national campaigns. For Head Office Marketing teams of large organizations (and Franchisors), there is the unique opportunity to empower their networks (and Franchisees) with smart tech – Local Area Marketing Platforms that execute ruthlessly efficient LAM strategies, turning local prospects into local customers. These platforms have been enthusiastically embraced by companies around the world with great effect. Properly sourced and administered, they are potent marketing weapons.

The beauty of these LAM Platforms is that they usually incorporate a combination of an Automated Ad Production system that helps users create brand compliant content wherever they are in the network, together with Digital Asset Management (DAM) software that organizes and distributes media files in a central portal. This kind of tech allows network users to create powerful LAM campaigns that hinge off a nationwide campaign rolled out by national marketing teams. This goes well beyond brand guidelines and corporate identification compliance requirements. Class leading LAM platforms completely automate the process, giving network users access to online, editable templates to customize national campaign assets for their local communication needs. Assets and editable templates available to the network within these platforms cover all elements of a modern campaign including all media (Social/electronic/traditional print and press) together with customizable elements that allow for messaging and visual elements that 'speak' to the local audience.



Stakeholders **are key.**

LAM Platforms are the future for marketing departments. They save time. They save money. They streamline workflows. They empower. They protect the brand.

However, there is a 'but'.

They're brilliant when all stakeholders are invested in the platform, but they can fall short of expectations if they're not properly supported or have fundamental flaws in the way they're set up that prevent long term user engagement.

It can be the best designed, most user-friendly piece of tech going around, but without full support from the CEO down through the Marketing Department and out to your Regional Sales team, it will struggle.

Platform onboarding and ongoing network engagement plans are also vital for the success of a platform. There is a science to "onboarding" which revolves around the following important elements:



Content Management

A thorough analysis of your Brand Guidelines and a full content/asset audit is step one. What does a typical Campaign or collection of content look like for your organization? How do these tie into your Brand Guidelines? It's critical to understand the current communications mix and assess the content that needs to be leveraged for your network. During the process, you need to examine the content that works and what the gaps are, including the additional assets you'll need to collate for the DAM. Best practice LAM software providers will assist you in taking the content and analyzing how it will come alive in the system. If necessary, they will have a solution for additional content creation where required.

People and Process

Important functional analysis here will examine the users and locations requirements and the user permissions matrix, approval workflows and reporting needs. Remember that you are aiming for a frictionless Platform introduction, so you need to align your business processes and practices with the software.

Tech Setup

Your LAM Platform provider has a lot of work to do behind the scenes, setting up domains, organizing logins with Single Sign On, handling Data setup (users, permissions and workflows)

finalizing the Site Setup to suit your organization, Content Migration (assets, editable template creation and upload, fonts etc) and Platform testing. Once again, you are aiming for a smooth integration within your business.

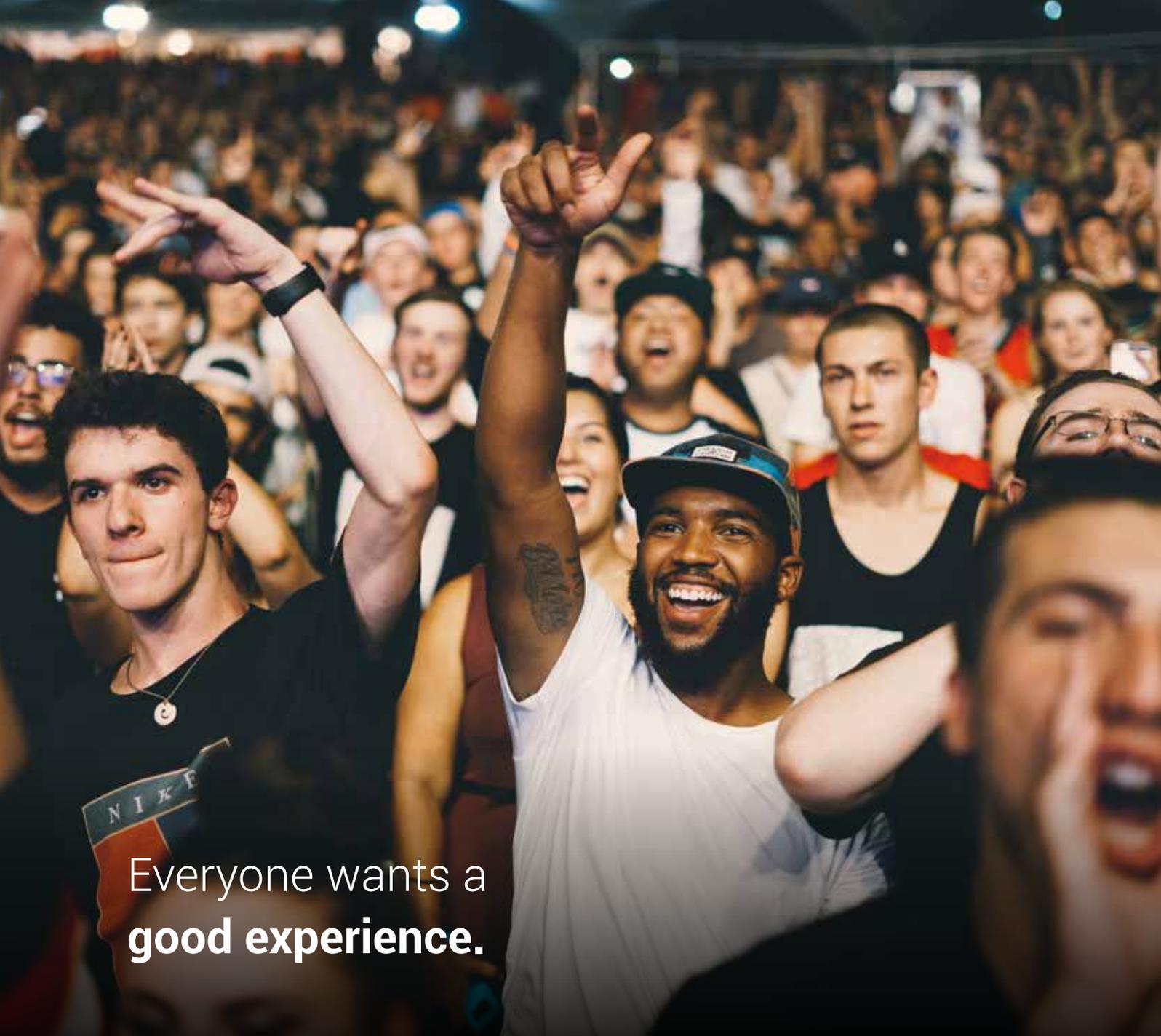
Pilot/Training/Launch

A carefully orchestrated training program that gets all users in the network up to speed on the finer points of the platform is paramount to success. If necessary, a Pilot program can also play a role in testing the platform setup and the manner in which users interact with it. A considered timeline keeps everyone on track for Launch.

Operational synchronicity

All throughout the onboarding process, your chosen LAM Platform supplier should be assessing your operational structure, culture, branding ethos, team mix (including decision makers and gatekeepers), communication/catchup cadence, Agency partner setup, planning/budget cycles and financial requirement to ensure they are completely aligned with your company.

So how long does this onboarding process take? Less time than you think – particularly if your Platform provider has a strong track record of working with brands across a range of industries. We're talking weeks, not months.

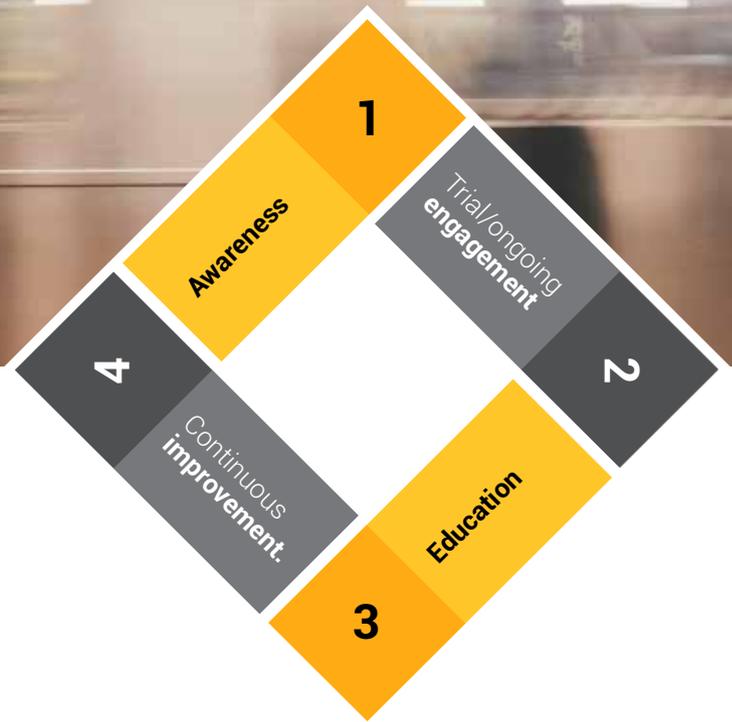


Everyone wants a **good experience.**

The time invested in onboarding is key to getting the platform off the ground, but it's not the only arbiter of as to whether it flies. Ease of use is paramount – the user experience simply must be seamless, and this is where your choice of LAM Platform relies on doing some research and getting a demonstration of what that UX is like.

You'll be assessing how easy it is to navigate the platform to search/sort assets and access campaigns to modify editable

templates. You'll also be looking at things like approval processes, workflow tools, reporting functionality and most importantly, the speed of the system in crafting content (hint: HTML builds are fastest and happen before your eyes – make sure your platform caters for this technology). It goes without saying that the LAM Platform you choose will need to be able to create every piece of content you can think of, from video, press, print and outdoor to the full gamut of online and social media content.



Maintaining the momentum.

It's one thing to get your network onto the platform, but a longer-term strategy to keep them engaged is vital to maintain the momentum. Network Engagement is as much about proving out the investment and the process as it is about getting the network users comfortable with the system. A strong Network Engagement Plan to get users coming back time and again to create their own content should be the natural extension to the onboarding program. Class leading suppliers will have a plan in place that takes you from take-off (Launch) to leveling out at 30,000 feet and maintaining altitude.

1. Awareness.

Raising awareness around the platform to pique interest and enthuse the network around its virtues is a critical part of the launch process in the final phase of the onboarding program. Hype videos focusing on core features and eDMs communicating exciting new content coming are cornerstone elements of this awareness piece. Less here is not more. Ensure

there are plenty of marketing assets, templates and campaign content hitting the network to whet their appetite and have a plan for regular awareness raising to make sure new assets and templates that hit the platform are shared with the entire network.

2. Ongoing Engagement

Getting people to engage with the platform from launch is obviously important – but a strategy to keep them coming back is equally key. A LAM Platform will need to cater for a spectrum of user needs moving forward to guarantee its success. Many platform providers mistakenly believe that the flexibility of the editable templates within the system is the driver of success. Yes, template flexibility – providing different page layouts and assets, giving users the ability to resize within the platform and providing a range of output file formats is important. But it's the science of user behavior that often plays a much more important role in platform success.



In any given user network, there is a spectrum of users that will access the system and each of these users will react differently to the nature of the content in the system and the degree of editability. Fully flexible templates are lost on time poor users just as relatively inflexible templates are frustrating for invested users. It is about providing choice and a level of customization that works for the group of users within the network. Ultimately, the system needs to be able to take some users 'by the hand' and deliver a product that is on brand, yet is agile enough to provide a level of comfort about tailoring content that's fit for their local purpose. But equally, it needs to be able to offer the more 'invested user' with enough content choice and template flexibility to keep them satisfied.

Industry leading LAM Platform providers will have deep insights around content usage trends, how users react to the spectrum of customization available and being able to recommend template flexibility parameters around the different types of users. This approach will yield a 'Sweet Spot' of template flexibility that will satisfy the vast majority of users and ensure they return to the platform again and again to create their content.

3. Education

The third pillar of Network Engagement is having a robust plan around training. Webinars, National Conferences and regular Roadshows have a significant impact on platform usage particularly if that suite of training resources caters for everyone from beginners to advanced users of the system.

Train the Trainer programs will also make a difference as will online knowledge resources. Remember that the user groups are always changing - it will vary as new users enter the system over time. Being diligent around constant training keeps both current and new users up to date and engaged.

4. Continuous Improvement

Continuous Improvement is the last piece to consider – think User Surveys and feedback from the Support teams behind the platform. A program of constant improvement provides accurate health checks on how the platform is performing, revealing information around things like usage trends, template completion rates, user types and content effectiveness. The 'Sweet Spot' of template flexibility will also move around over time depending on outside forces like market activity which impacts on how much time the users have to spend time in the platform creating content.



A commitment **worth making.**

This White Paper focuses on elements that ensure the successful implementation of a LAM Platform. What it doesn't cover is the selection of that Platform. This is an important process in itself and needs to be given due diligence to ensure the Platform meets your organization's needs. To assist in that selection process, there are comprehensive Buyer's Guides¹ available that cover everything from the basics of the Platforms through to detailed 'shopping lists' that itemize the must have elements.

Obviously that selection process will also take into account all the components discussed herein, together with (and this is particularly the case for larger networks) the virtues of a locally based support team that is on hand to provide network users with assistance. Knowledgeable support expertise helps manage change, bringing users closer to the software experience and ensures the highest levels of brand guardianship.

Industry leading service providers will underpin their product with a demonstration of their platform that gives you and your team a 'test drive' of the software to get a good feeling of the user experience. Their onboarding plan will feature content and media channel audits, pre-launch and launch communications, user training and IT synchronicity. And finally, their long-term Network Engagement strategy will be robust enough to have all your network users happily connecting with the platform to create their content.

Yes, putting a LAM Platform in place requires a significant level of commitment from you and your team. You are not just looking for the right Platform out there. You're also looking deeply within your own organization to assess your needs and understand the elements you need to prepare to mesh with the Platform. But this is a commitment that will pay handsome dividends, saving significant amounts of time and money and will get your Local Area Marketing humming.

¹ <https://www.myadbox.com/resources/brand-management-software-buying-guide>

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