

# The State of Digital Content

2023 Edition

Research Conducted in Partnership with Ascend2



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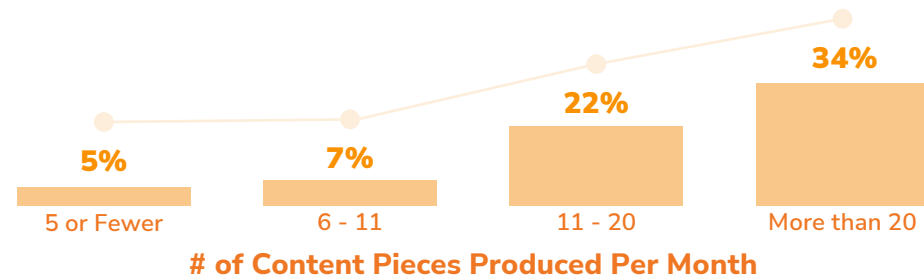
# Introduction

The processes that make up digital content creation and management have never been more complicated. These workflows now need to accommodate remote workers and resources, worldwide offices, and security and privacy concerns, not to mention the growing need for content and creative teams to produce more content in less time.

These lofty content production goals are proving to be worthwhile for organizations that achieve them. Our research shows that as content production volume goes up, so does the increase in Return on Investment (ROI) on content. In fact, content and creative teams producing the most content were significantly more likely to have seen increases in ROI last year.

## % of teams that reported significant increase in ROI on content and creative production last year.

(Segmented by amount of content produced)



But producing enough content is a top challenge for creative teams, especially smaller teams (creative teams with 5 or fewer employees) who ranked it #2 on their list of top challenges associated with content and creative production. Producing enough content requires efficiency and workflow management, backed by the right technology and resources.

So how are content and creative teams currently executing production and managing their workflows? What is working and what isn't when it comes to improving these efficiencies and successfully scaling content efforts? To answer these questions and more, we surveyed 643 professionals in the United States and the United Kingdom involved in the production, management, and/or strategy for content and creative assets at their organization. The research that follows takes a deep dive into the strategy, workflows, and technology that drives content and creative production.

# Key Highlights

**ROI is improved when workflows are efficient.** Content and creative professionals who describe their workflows as “very efficient” are 5x more likely to report a significant increase in content ROI than those with less efficient workflows.

**Significant time is being wasted** by content teams trying to locate assets needed to execute content programs. 57% of those surveyed report that their team wastes more than 3 hours per week trying to locate needed assets.

**Content and creative teams are seeing major consequences of workflow-related challenges.** Inefficiencies and wasted time, loss of productivity, and lag in time getting content to market rank among the top consequences of not overcoming workflow-related challenges overall.

**Teams with the right tech stack are happier** with how their content and creative is managed. Organizations that use a Digital Asset Management platform (DAM) are more than 2X more likely to be highly satisfied with how their digital content is currently managed and stored compared to those who use other tools for content storage.

**DAM users have better insight.** Digital Asset Management platform (DAM) users are 3X more capable of deriving extensive insights from their content management/storage tool to inform strategic decisions than those who use other tools for content storage.



# Special Segments

Throughout this report you will see references to specific segments that give an in-depth insight into the perspectives of various relevant groups: Those with the most efficient workflows, Digital Asset Management (DAM) users, and different content and creative team sizes. These segments are easily identified throughout this report with the icons to the right.



## Workflow Efficiency

Content and creative contributors who report that their team's workflows are "very efficient" (21%). This group gives us particularly helpful insight into the cause and effect of having best-in-class workflow efficiency.



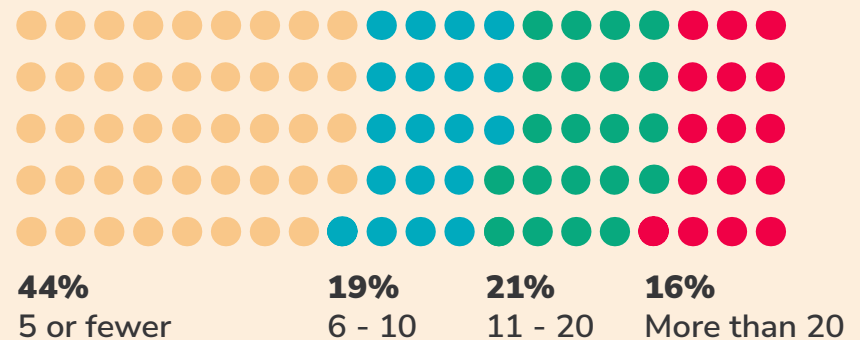
## DAM Users

The content and creative contributors who report that their organization uses Digital Asset Management (DAM) solutions to manage and store digital content (24%). This group is highlighted to showcase the potential impact of having a DAM solution can make on the organization and management of content and creative.



## Team Size

Content and creative contributors from teams of all sizes responded to the survey. The operations, challenges, and goals of teams of different size vary and are highlighted throughout the report.



# 1.0 Strategy

## Challenges with content and creative production

Overall, maintaining and updating content is the most commonly reported challenge by content marketers surveyed (37%). But as content and creative team sizes vary, so do their greatest barriers to success.

### Top 3 challenges associated with content and creative production.

(Segmented by team size)

<b>Large</b> (More than 20 people)	Finding assets efficiently	37%	<b>Search struggles.</b> Content and creative teams consisting of more than 20 people struggle with finding the assets they are looking for. Often this is a product of inadequate technology used to organize and manage content.
	Maintaining/updating content	35%	
	Implementing the right technology	33%	
<b>Mid-size</b> (6-20 people)	Allocating budget	38%	<b>Maintenance difficulties.</b> Nearly half (46%) of smaller content and creative teams report struggling with maintaining and updating content.
	Hiring adequate staff/resources	36%	
	Planning content and strategy	35%	
<b>Small</b> (5 or fewer people)	Maintaining/updating content	46%	
	Producing enough content	37%	
	Allocating budget	33%	

## 1.1 Strategy

### Top priorities for content and creative teams

Improving the customer experience and increasing ROI on their content programs are top priorities for content and creative teams in the year ahead. Organizational elements such as streamlining workflows and improving collaboration will also be top-of-mind for content and creative teams as they work to meet their strategic goals.

#### Top strategic priorities for content and creative teams in the coming year.

**55%** Improve the customer experience

**48%** Increase ROI

**34%** Streamline workflows

**33%** Improve collaboration

**31%** Grow/optimize team resources

**25%** Scale content production

**20%** Optimize technology stack

**17%** Better align with adjacent teams

## 5x

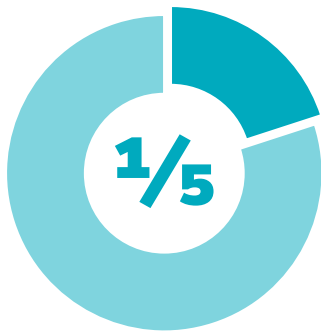
Our research indicates that streamlining workflows is critical to success. In fact, **survey respondents who describe their content and creative workflows as “very efficient” are 5x more likely to report a significant increase in content ROI** than those with less efficient workflows!

45% of those with very efficient workflows report a significant increase in ROI in their content and creative production last year compared to just 9% of those with less efficient workflows.

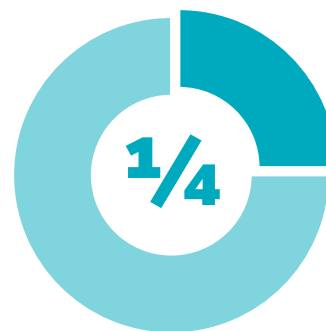
## 1.2 Strategy

### The Problem

It is no surprise that streamlining workflows will be among the top areas of strategic focus for content and creative teams in the coming year. Our research indicates that there is significant room for improvement when it comes to workflow efficiency and organization.



Only 21% of those surveyed describe their content and creative workflows as "very efficient."



Only one-quarter (24%) of those surveyed say that their content approval workflows are extensively organized and managed.



About half of those surveyed report that creating content (52%), managing content (49%), and planning content (47%) need workflow improvement.



#### Workflows need work.

Improving workflows alleviates pressure from strategic challenges. Content and creative teams that are “best-in-class” at workflow efficiency are significantly less likely to report being challenged with maintaining/updating content (30% vs 39%) and producing enough content (27% vs. 34%).

In the pages that follow, we'll take a deep dive into why it is important to get workflows right.



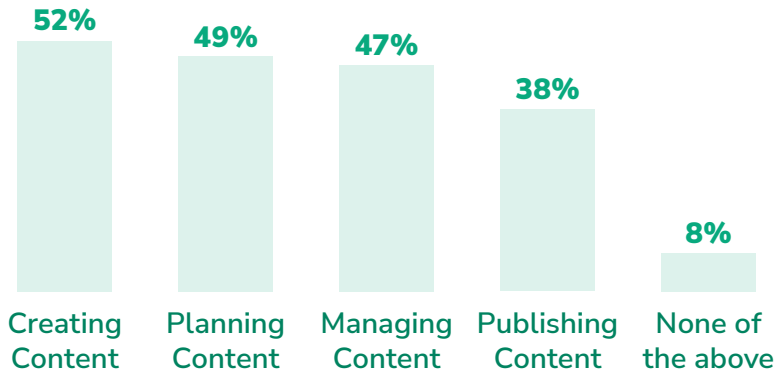
# 2.0 Workflows

## Areas in need of improvement

From conceptualization and creation to publishing and management, the processes required to execute content programs can be complex, typically requiring contributions from multiple people.

While improvement is clearly needed across all areas, creating content was identified as an area that is in need of the most improvement when it comes to workflows according to content and creative contributors surveyed (52%). Content creation workflows often involve many rounds of sharing, feedback, and edits. As different versions of assets accumulate, the organization becomes critical to maintaining productivity.

Which of the following areas needs workflow improvement?



**Businesses need to work on content organization and management.** Less than one-quarter of content and creative contributors report having extensively organized content taxonomies, editorial calendars, content approval workflows, and customer journey mapping.

### % of those who are extensively organized in the following strategic areas:



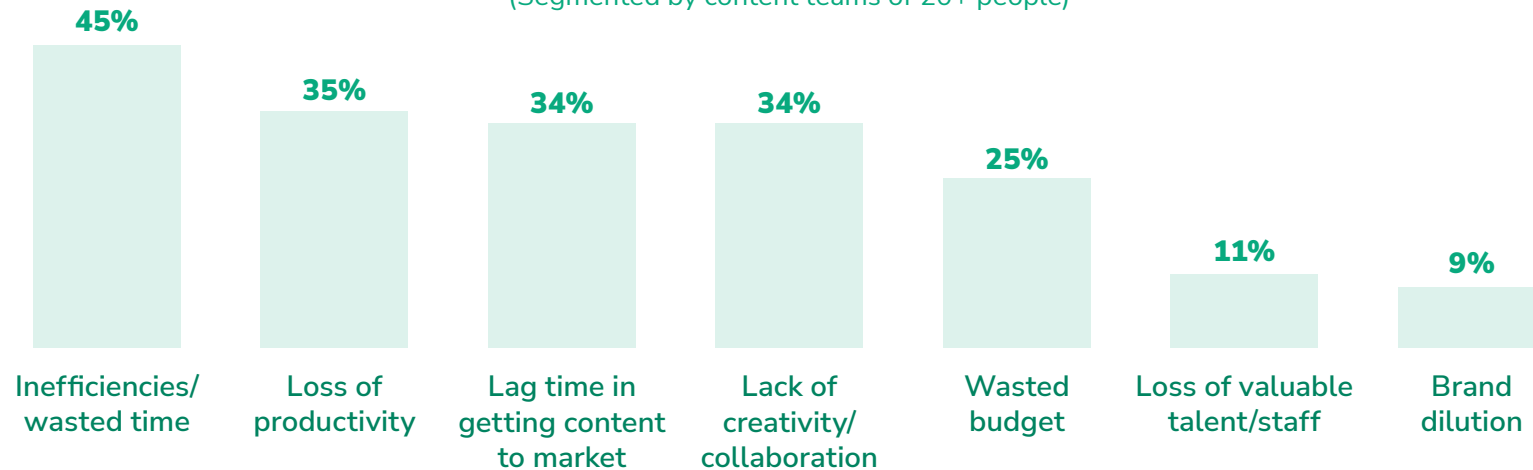
## 2.1 Workflows

### Consequences of not improving workflows

Failing to optimize workflows can cost businesses in a big way, specifically in the areas of productivity and production. Inefficiencies and wasted time, loss of productivity, and lag in time getting content to market rank among the top consequences of not overcoming workflow-related challenges overall.

#### Which of the following have you experienced as a consequence of workflow-related challenges?

(Segmented by content teams of 20+ people)



#### Large Teams

These troubles are more extreme as content and creative teams get bigger. According to those with 20 or more people contributing to the content and creative production at their organization, 41% say they've experienced wasted budget as a consequence of workflow-related challenges, and close to one-third say they have lost valuable talent/staff and have experienced brand dilution.



**Workflow efficiency fuels content production.** Content and creative teams with the most efficient workflows produce more content than others. This group is more than 2x more likely than others to be producing over 20 content pieces per month. (44% vs 19% of all others).

## 2.2 Workflows

### Improving workflow efficiency

So what will improve workflow efficiency? According to nearly half (46%) of content and creative contributors surveyed, their content needs to be better organized in order to improve content production and management workflows, while over one-third (35%) of say that they struggle with collaboration between teams as they try to improve workflow efficiency.

Just under one-third (32%) feel that replacing or updating their technology stack as well as minimizing manual work such as entering metadata and assigning tasks would help them to improve their team's issues with content production and management workflows.

### Which of the following would most improve your team's content production and management workflows?

Better organization of content

46%

Better collaboration between teams

35%

Replace/update/consolidate technology

32%

Less manual work (e.g., entering metadata, assigning tasks)

32%

Improving brand management

30%

Reporting that shows how often content is used/reused and by whom

24%

Transparency into available/approved assets

23%

## 3.0 Technology

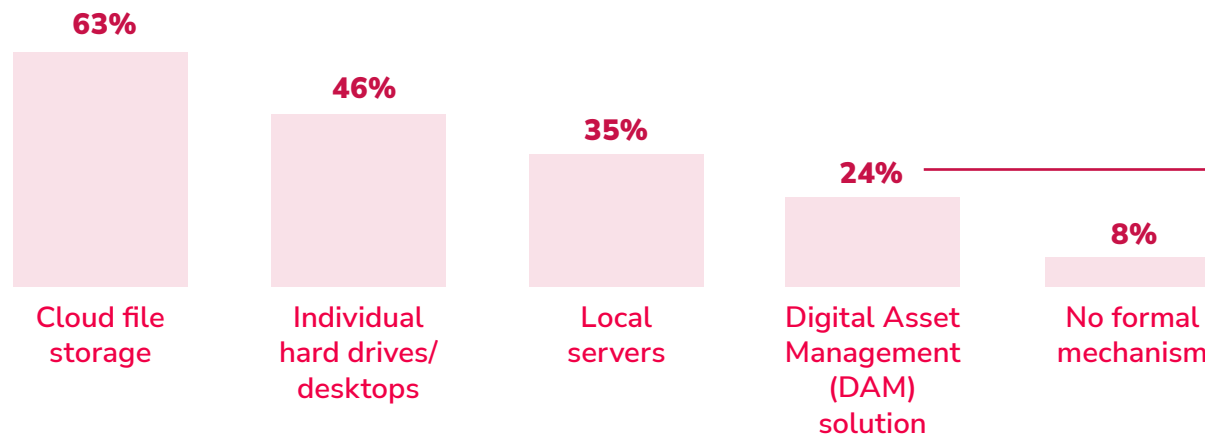
### How is digital content currently being managed and stored?

The technology that drives content production and management can enable collaboration, make teams more productive and efficient, and most importantly save company time and dollars. But only 29% of those surveyed report being very satisfied with how digital content is currently managed and stored at their organization.

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of businesses report using cloud file storage to store and manage digital content at their organization. Nearly half (46%) of content and creative teams report using individual hard drives and desktops to store and manage digital assets. DAM solutions are used by 24% of those surveyed.

Digital Asset Management (DAM) users are more than 2X more likely to be highly satisfied with how their digital content is currently managed and stored compared to those who use other tools for content storage. (51% vs 22% are very satisfied)

### How is digital content currently managed and stored at your organization?



#### Large Teams

Larger content and creative teams (20 or more people) are significantly more likely to be using a DAM solution than smaller teams. Half (50%) of larger teams are using DAM compared to 29% of mid-size teams and just 9% of small teams.



#### B2B Perspective

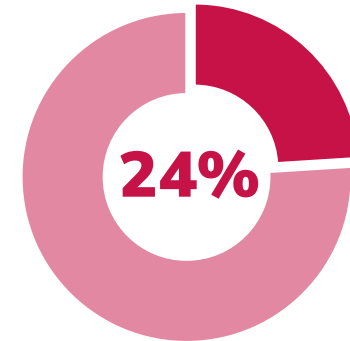
B2B organizations are more likely to be using DAM solutions. 22% of organizations operating in the B2B space are using DAM compared to just 9% of those in the B2C space.

### 3.1 Technology

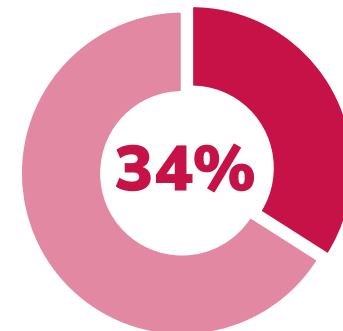
Your technology should enable you to...

#### Collaborate remotely.

Nearly two-thirds (62%) of those surveyed report working at least part of the time remotely. There is a notable lack of satisfaction with this group when it comes to the collaboration capabilities their current technology enables. Less than one-quarter (24%) of this group of remote workers report being very satisfied with their ability to share and manage content.



Less than one-quarter of remote workers are very satisfied with their ability to share and manage content.



More than one-third (34%) of remote workers say that sharing capabilities would most improve the technology they utilize for storing and managing digital content.



#### Empowering Remote Teams.

DAM users are more than 2x more likely to be highly satisfied with their ability to share and manage content with remote workers or outsourced resources than those who use other tools for content storage. (54% vs 24% are very satisfied)

## 3.2 Technology

Your technology should enable you to...

### Search and Find With Ease.

Search capabilities are in the top two most commonly reported ways in which the technology used to store and manage data could be improved according to 37% of content and creative contributors. Your technology shouldn't make it difficult to find the asset you are looking for. Your solution for storing and managing content should allow you to discover the asset you are looking for, instantly. Features such as tagging, sorting, version control, and even facial recognition can help.

### Which of the following would most improve the technology utilized to manage and store content?

Organization

43%

Search capabilities

37%

Sharing capabilities

35%

Tagging/metadata

28%

Downloading

27%

Access control

27%

Version control/history

24%

Organization and search capabilities are top issues for content and creative contributors when it comes to how they store and manage their content.

### Reclaim wasted time.

Time is being wasted by content teams trying to locate assets needed to execute content programs. Over half (57%) of those surveyed report that their team wastes more than 3 hours per week trying to locate needed assets.

**That's around 144 hours per year... about 3.5 full work weeks!**

### 3.3 Technology

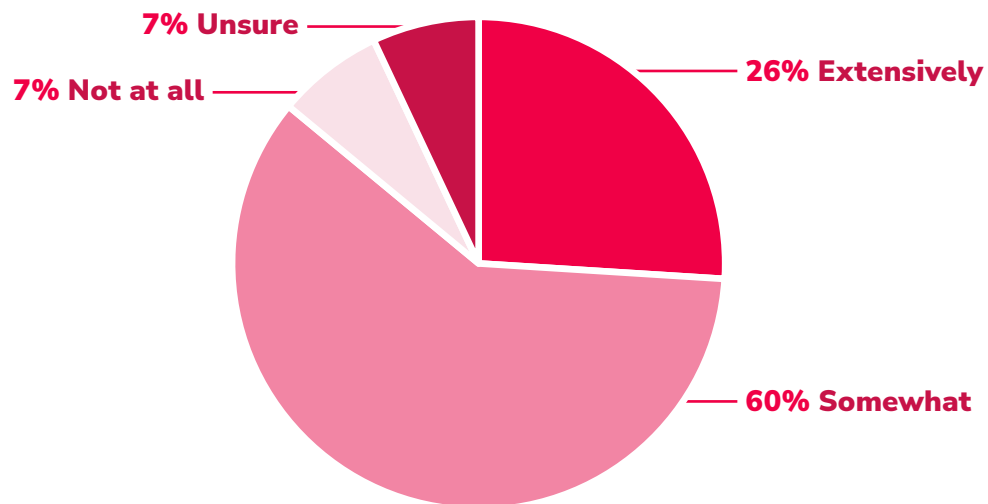
Your technology should enable you to...

#### Gain Insight.

Only one-quarter (26%) of those surveyed are able to extensively derive insights from their content management and storage tool to inform strategic decisions.

Your technology can tell you a lot about how your team is executing its efforts and where improvements can be made. Your technology should help you to alleviate bottlenecks and other pain points by allowing you to derive actionable insights about how it is being used.

**To what extent are you able to derive insights from your content management/storage tool to inform strategic decisions?**



#### Better Content Insights.

DAM users are 3X more capable of deriving extensive insights from their content management/storage tool to inform strategic decisions than those who use other tools for content storage. (51% vs 17%)

### 3.4 Technology

## The Advantage of Using DAM Solutions

About one-quarter (24%) of content and creative teams surveyed use a Digital Asset Management (DAM) solution to manage and store content. According to this group, the most useful features of a DAM mirror the top features that would most improve the technology utilized to manage and store content. Search capabilities, sharing capabilities, and organization.

#### What are the most useful features of your DAM solution?

##### Search capabilities

50%

##### Sharing capabilities

43%

##### Organization

42%

##### Tagging/metadata

34%

##### Access control

34%

##### Version control/history

33%

##### Downloading

32%



**DAM users** are nearly 3X more likely to have very efficient content and creative workflows compared to those who use other tools for content storage. (42% vs 15% said very efficient)

DAM users are nearly 3X more likely than all others to have seen a significant increase in content ROI in the last year.



# Participants

N = 643 Content and Creative Contributors

## Region

United States	62%
United Kingdom	38%

## Marketing Channel

B2B	24%
B2B and B2C equally	50%
B2C	26%

## Role in Company

Executive / Owner / Partner	58%
Vice President / Director / Manager	32%
Non-management / Individual Contributor	10%

## Team Size

More than 20	16%
11 - 20	21%
6 - 10	19%
5 or fewer	44%

## Workplace Environment

Mostly or fully in-office/on-site	38%
Hybrid (mostly equal combination of on-site and re-	39%
Mostly or fully remote/off-site	23%

## Resource Distribution

Mostly or entirely in-house resources	52%
Equal combination of internal and outsourced resourc-	43%
Mostly or entirely outsourced resources	5%

# Methodology

Ascend2 benchmarks the performance of business strategies and the tactics and technology that drives them. With a custom online questionnaire, our “Content and Creative Production and Management” survey was fielded during the month of September 2022. We collected responses from 643 full-time employees in the United States and the United Kingdom who self-identified as being involved in the production, management, and/or strategy for content and creative assets at their organization.

# About the Research Partners



Canto is a leader in digital asset management (DAM) software, with customers that include many of today's top brands. This simple yet intuitive solution gives organizations a visual way to centralize, organize and share all their digital brand assets, empowering them to save valuable time and gain a competitive edge. Canto's DAM solution has wide applicability to various industry verticals, including retail, manufacturing, education, transportation, hospitality, nonprofits, healthcare, food and beverage, technology, and more. Canto's corporate headquarters is in San Francisco, with offices in Berlin and Frankfurt, Germany.

For more information, visit [www.canto.com](http://www.canto.com).



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