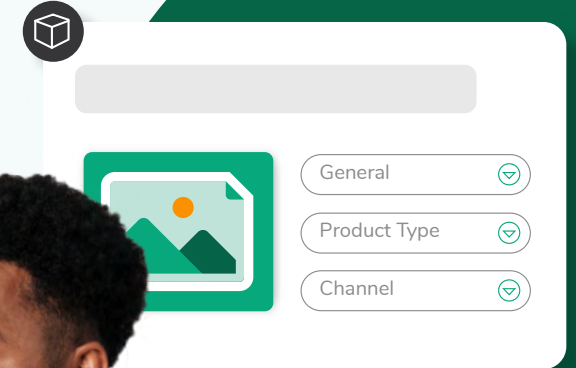


The State of Digital Content

2025 Edition



Research conducted in partnership with Ascend2

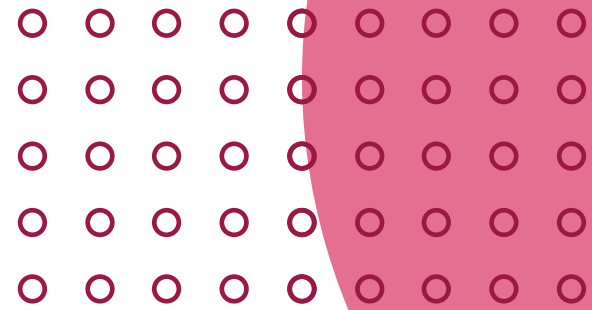


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Introduction



Content is foundational to an organization's brand identity, engagement, and customer loyalty, making it a powerful driver of revenue growth. However the ever-increasing demand for content has teams under more pressure than ever to maximize output and demonstrate ROI on their efforts.

Our research shows that 77% of content and creative professionals expect their production volume to increase in the coming year, up from 72% in [previous years](#), but only 25% of those surveyed feel they have the right tools in place to effectively meet the growing demands for digital content. This gap indicates a critical need for organizations to adopt resources and technology that enable optimized content utilization and streamlined workflows for more efficient production, management, and distribution.

To gain insight into how content and creative teams manage mounting demands and complex workflows, we surveyed 423 professionals on the tools, processes, and tactics they rely on to stay efficient and support growth. The findings reveal that achieving a streamlined content ecosystem that enables alignment, enhances performance measurement, and lightens production burdens is essential for teams striving to make a more substantial impact.

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the state of content creation, management, and distribution today, highlighting key areas where content teams can innovate and enhance their workflows. From this report, you'll get a behind-the-scenes look into current practices and future plans of content teams across industries and discover ways to elevate your strategy as you work toward improving content performance.

We hope you enjoy the report!

The Canto Team



Key Highlights



Content teams are having to do more with less. 77% of content and creatives teams expect their content volume to grow in the coming year, an increase from last year's survey. However, content teams expecting budget cuts is also growing, with 17% projecting budget cuts compared to just 10% last year.

Priorities are shifting. Last year's data indicated that improving the customer experience was the most commonly reported priority for content and creative teams. However, this year, content and creative teams report a strong focus on improving content quality and relevance and building brand awareness in 2025 over improving the customer experience.

Complex and disconnected content ecosystems are slowing teams down. Nearly half of the content teams surveyed rely on four or more solutions in their content ecosystem, but about one-quarter (24%) say they lack the necessary tools and expertise to maximize the ROI of their digital content.

Inefficient Workflows Are a Growing Challenge.

Inefficient workflows are taking a toll on content teams, with 45% reporting productivity losses due to workflow-related issues—an increase from 38% last year. These challenges lead to wasted time, inefficiencies, and budget overruns, while also negatively impacting creativity, collaboration, and talent retention. Alarming trends include rising reports of wasted budget (35% vs 32%) and brand dilution (23% vs 18%) compared to prior years.

DAM users see better results. 77% of content teams using a DAM solution find collaboration on content easy, compared to 68% of those not using a DAM. DAM users also saw more significant increases in content ROI last year and feel more confident that they are using the right tools and systems to maximize their content ROI.

Top performers are getting creative with the use of AI. Content teams that saw the most significant increases in content ROI last year are 1.7x more likely than others to use AI for content organization and automated tagging and 1.5x more likely to use AI for enhancing content search and discovery.



Special Segments



DAM Users. About one-third (34%) of those surveyed use a DAM platform to manage their digital assets. Comparing this group to those without a DAM solution allows us to see differences in each solution's impact on success.



Top Performers. Less than one in five (19%) of those surveyed report a significant increase in the change in return on investment (ROI) in their content and creative production in the last year. This group gives us insight into what organizations that are experiencing great success are doing differently.



Team Size. The number of employees contributing to content and creative production (planning, production, management, distribution) varies by company. Look for this graphic to see how different content team sizes compare as they work to improve content performance.



Content Trends. This is our third year of publishing our State of Digital Content report. Keep an eye out for year-over-year trends throughout this report that give you an idea of how the digital content landscape is changing. See our 2023 and 2024 reports [here](#).



Content Strategy and Priorities

Content teams will focus on improving content quality and relevance in the year ahead

In 2025, content teams plan to prioritize the quality and relevance of the content they produce, with 50% of teams reporting this as their top priority. This is an interesting shift from our [2024 results](#) which indicated that improving the customer experience was the most commonly reported priority for content and creative teams. This increased focus on quality, relevance, and personalization highlights the rising importance of a content strategy that enables advanced targeting, sophisticated audience segmentation, and a more substantial reliance on analytics. Investing in tools to drive this shift will be crucial to delivering the right message to the right people at the right time.

Which of the following are top PRIORITIES for your content program in 2025?

Improve content quality and relevance

50%

Build brand awareness

46%

Improve the customer experience

42%

Improve efficiency and collaboration

37%

Grow and optimize team resources

32%

Create and distribute more content

32%

Increase content ROI

31%

50%

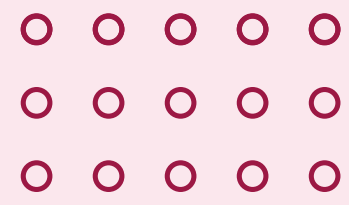
plan to prioritize the quality and relevance of the content they produce in 2025



Top Performers

Streamlining Workflows to Boost Content Output

Teams with the biggest boosts in content ROI last year are less focused on building brand awareness and more on scaling content production. Their top priorities include improving efficiency and collaboration, growing their teams, and creating and sharing more content.



Keeping up with content demands remains a top challenge

Meeting ever-rising content demands across channels is still among the top challenges reported by content teams, similar to previous years' findings. This issue seems to have been exacerbated by the increasing use of generative AI, making content production easier but management more challenging. Allocating the budget and resources required to meet these growing demands is also a top barrier to success for over one-third of content teams surveyed.

What are the top CHALLENGES that your organization faces in creating, managing, and distributing content?



Content Trend

Teams need to do more with less

Content teams are bracing for a challenging year ahead. Our research shows a growing number of teams that expect to face budget cuts, with **17%** expecting decreases in their budget for content and creative production compared to just **10%** last year.

Meanwhile, **77%** of teams project a rise in content volume, meaning many will be expected to deliver more high-quality content with limited budget growth. This is up from **72%** in previous years.



Maximizing existing content to keep up with rising demands

Repurposing content allows teams to maximize resources by adapting existing content for different formats, channels, or audiences, saving both time and budget. However, reinventing existing content can be challenging. Adapting content for various platforms, maintaining brand consistency, and lack of time are the top barriers that content teams face when repurposing content.



Tip

Digital Asset Management (DAM) platforms enable more efficient use of existing content. One in five (**21%**) of those surveyed find repurposing content to be extremely easy.

This group that finds repurposing content to be extremely easy is more likely to be using a DAM to manage, organize, and store content than those who have a harder time with repurposing (**41% vs 32%**).



What challenges do you face when REPURPOSING content?

Adapting content for various platforms

38%

Maintaining brand consistency

36%

Lack of time/resources required for repurposing

36%

Finding the right assets quickly

35%

Measuring effectiveness of repurposed content

35%

Tracking content usage

34%

Effective collaboration across teams

30%

Managing version control

29%

Efficiently scaling amount of content we repurpose

26%

None of the above

3%



The Content Technology Ecosystem



Streamlining content technology

Content teams most commonly rely on social media management, content creation, and email marketing tools in their content technology stack, with about one-third also using CRM, analytics, and project management tools. With nearly half (45%) of content teams using four or more solutions to create, manage, and distribute content, streamlining the content ecosystem is crucial. Consolidating and integrating these tools can significantly improve workflow efficiency, reduce friction, and enable teams to produce higher volumes of quality content.

Which of the following TOOLS make up your content ecosystem (creating, managing, and distributing content)?

| | |
|--|-----|
| Social media management and scheduling tools | 51% |
| Content creation tools | 41% |
| Email marketing platforms | 37% |
| Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tools | 33% |
| Analytics and reporting tools | 33% |
| Project management/Workflow automation tools | 32% |
| Content Management Systems (CMS) | 31% |
| Search Engine Optimization (SEO) tools | 31% |
| Digital Asset Management (DAM) platforms | 27% |
| Content distribution platforms | 27% |
| Marketing Automation Platforms (MAP) | 24% |
| Product Information Management (PIM) systems | 21% |



Team Size

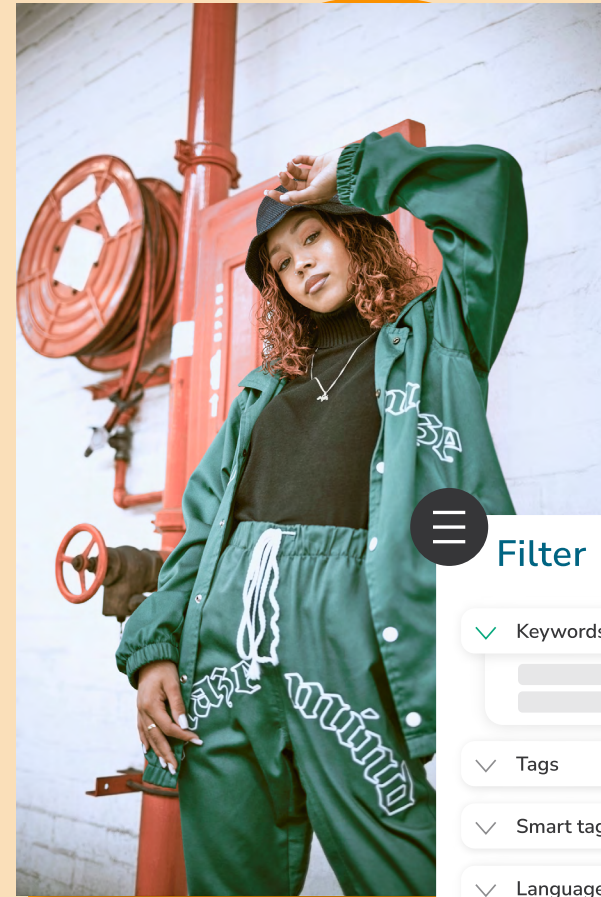
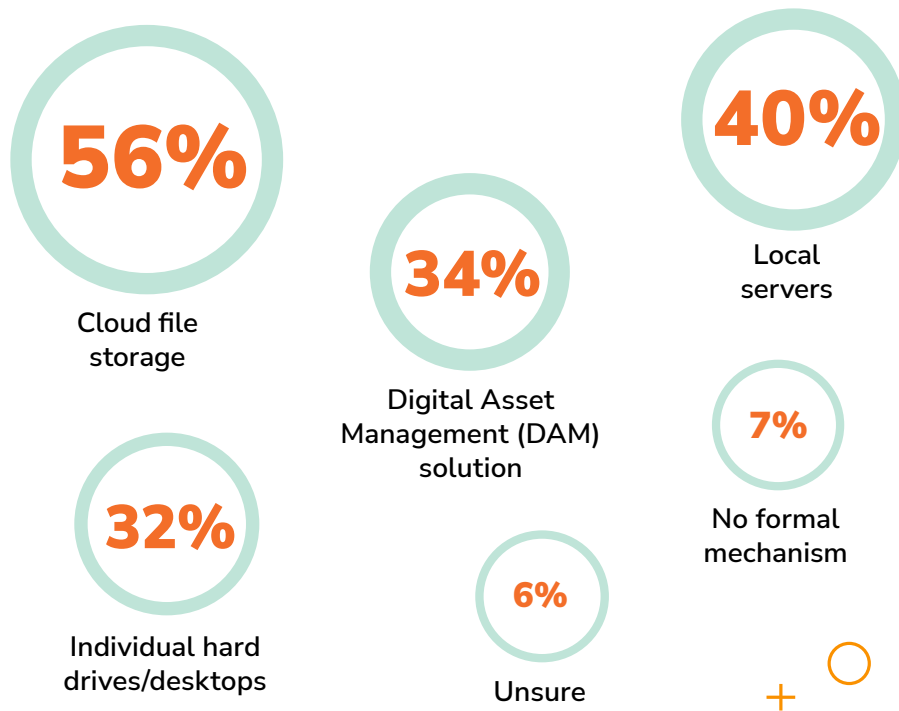
Complex Content Ecosystems

Nearly half of content teams use four or more tools in their content ecosystem, and **18%** rely on six or more. This overcomplicated tech stack slows teams down, highlighting the need for streamlined solutions to boost efficiency and ROI.

Managing, organizing, and storing content

Cloud file storage and local servers remain the most commonly reported solutions for content management, with 56% and 40% of professionals relying on these methods to manage and store digital content, respectively. Just over one-third (34%) of professionals are leveraging Digital Asset Management (DAM) solutions. Individual hard drives or desktops are also prevalent, used by 32%, though these solutions may pose challenges for scalability and efficiency.

How is digital content **MANAGED, ORGANIZED, AND STORED** at your organization?



↑ ↓

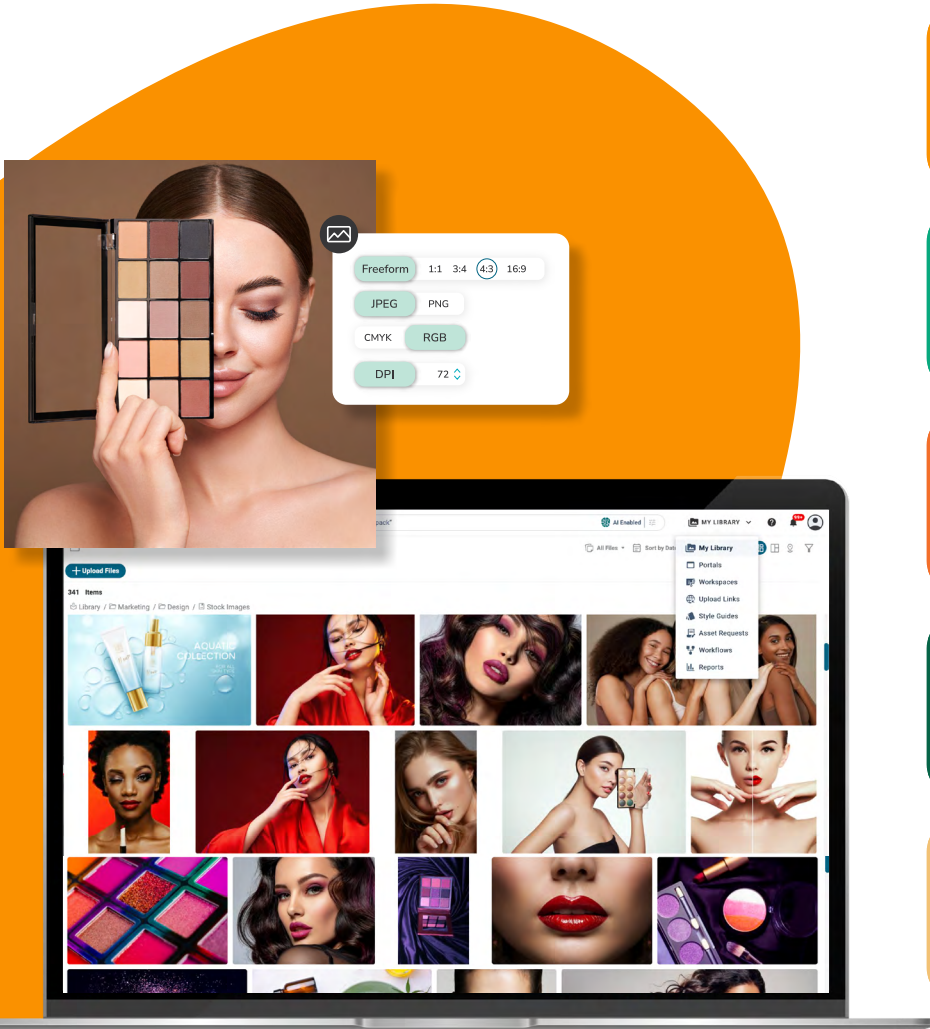
⚙️

☰ Filter

- ✓ Keywords
- Tags
- Smart tags
- Language
- People
- Content type

The Benefits of Digital Asset Management (DAM)

For organizations using DAM in their effort to manage, organize, and store content, the advantages are significant. Our research indicates that the benefits of using a DAM solution extend beyond basic content storage.



Higher ROI: 80% of DAM users report an increase in content ROI, compared to just 63% of non-DAM users.



Right Tools, Right Expertise: DAM users are twice as likely to strongly agree that they have the tools and expertise needed to maximize digital content ROI (37% vs 19%).



Streamlined Brand Management: DAM users experience greater ease in maintaining brand consistency (29% vs 22%).



Data-Driven Insights: More DAM users report ease in measuring and analyzing content performance (25% vs 18%).

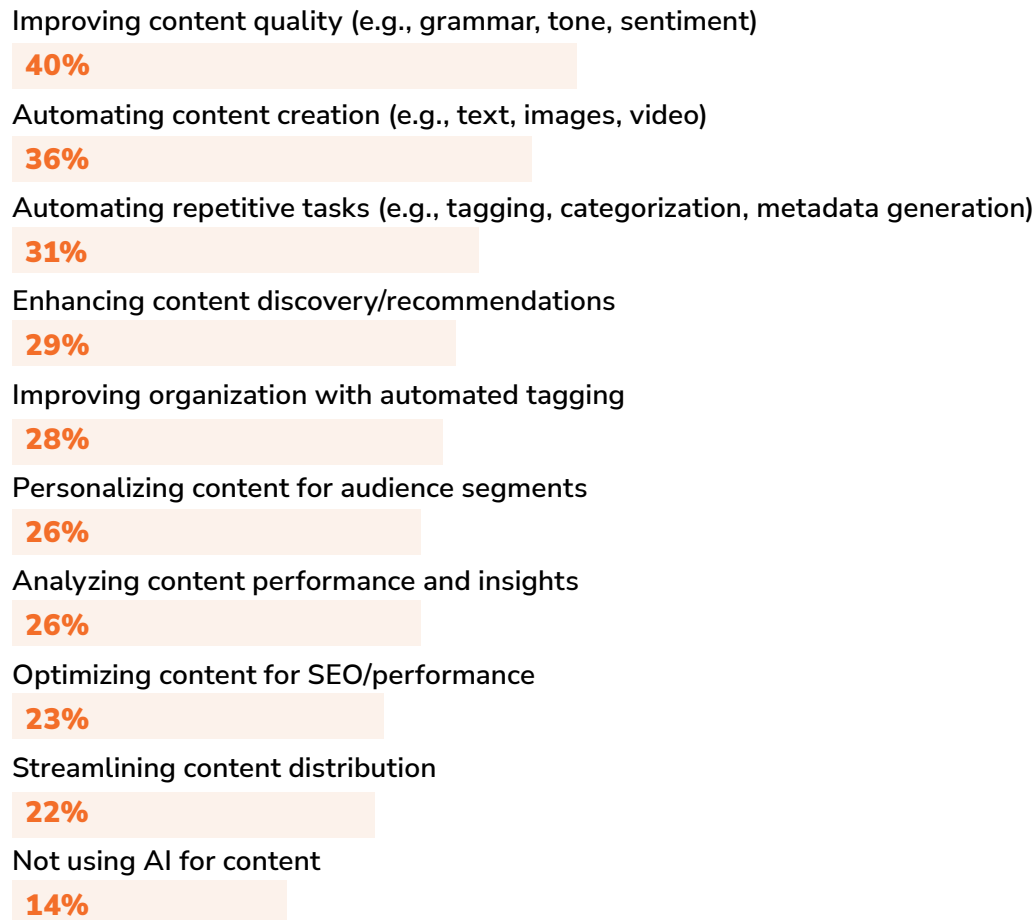


Targeted Content Delivery: Effective and compliant content distribution to the right audience is smoother for DAM users (24% vs 18%).

The use of AI for content creation and management

AI is becoming a transformative force in elevating the efficiency of content teams and the quality of the content they produce and distribute. According to those surveyed, 40% of content teams use AI to enhance content quality, 36% automate content creation, and 31% apply AI to streamline repetitive tasks like tagging and categorization.

How are you using AI to create, manage, and distribute content?



Top Performers

AI for boosting productivity and improving content ROI

AI enables content teams to handle growing volumes of digital content more efficiently, enhancing productivity, brand consistency, and personalized content delivery. In our 2024 report, **82%** of content teams anticipated using AI to boost efficiency and another **59%** to increase content production.

This year, our Top Performers are more likely to use AI to create, manage, and distribute content across the board. This group is **1.7x** more likely than others to leverage AI for automated tagging and content organization, and **1.5x** more likely to be enhancing content discovery with AI. These AI use cases streamline processes and allow content teams to drive higher ROI.



Managing product information

As content teams recognize the need to consolidate and streamline their content ecosystem to improve efficiency and content ROI, the need to better organize, manage, and access product information becomes a necessity. Unifying product information ensures quality and consistency of content across platforms, reinforcing brand cohesion and building consumer trust.

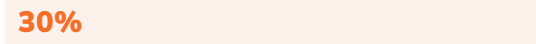
Many content teams struggle with product data management. Nearly one-third of content teams surveyed report a lack of standardization in product naming conventions and limited search functionality. Data silos are also common, with 30% of respondents reporting that product information is stored across multiple, often disconnected, locations.

What are your top challenges associated with MANAGING AND ACCESSING product information at your organization?

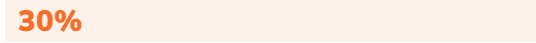
Lack of standardization in product naming conventions



Limited search functionality for product information



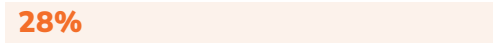
Product data stored across multiple locations



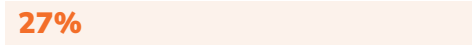
Lack of version control for product information updates



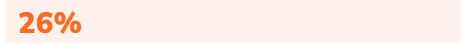
Disorganized or incomplete product information



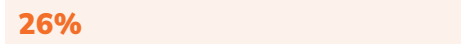
Limited access to product data due to permissions or restrictions



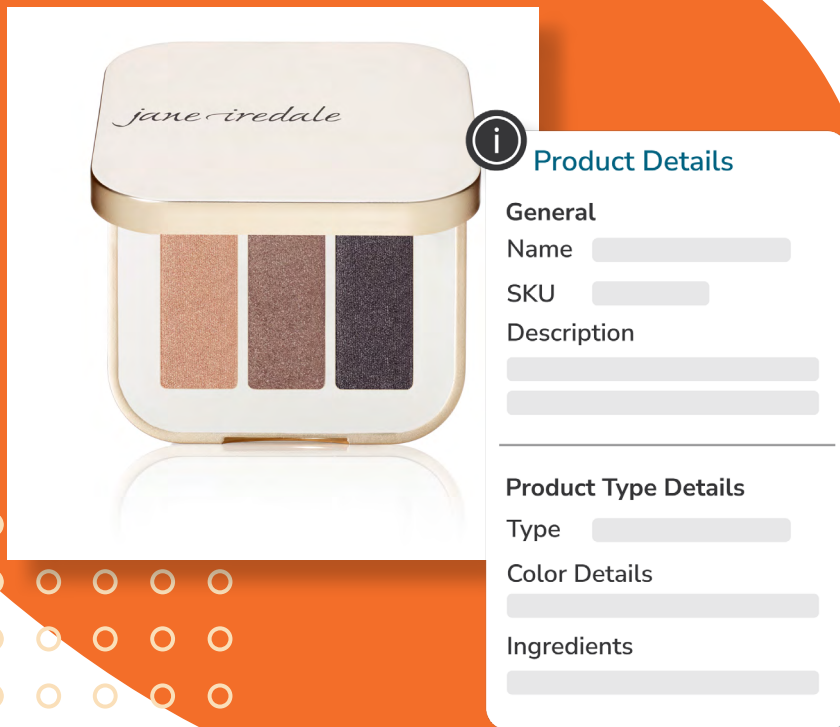
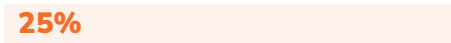
Duplicate or outdated product data



Inability to integrate product information across systems

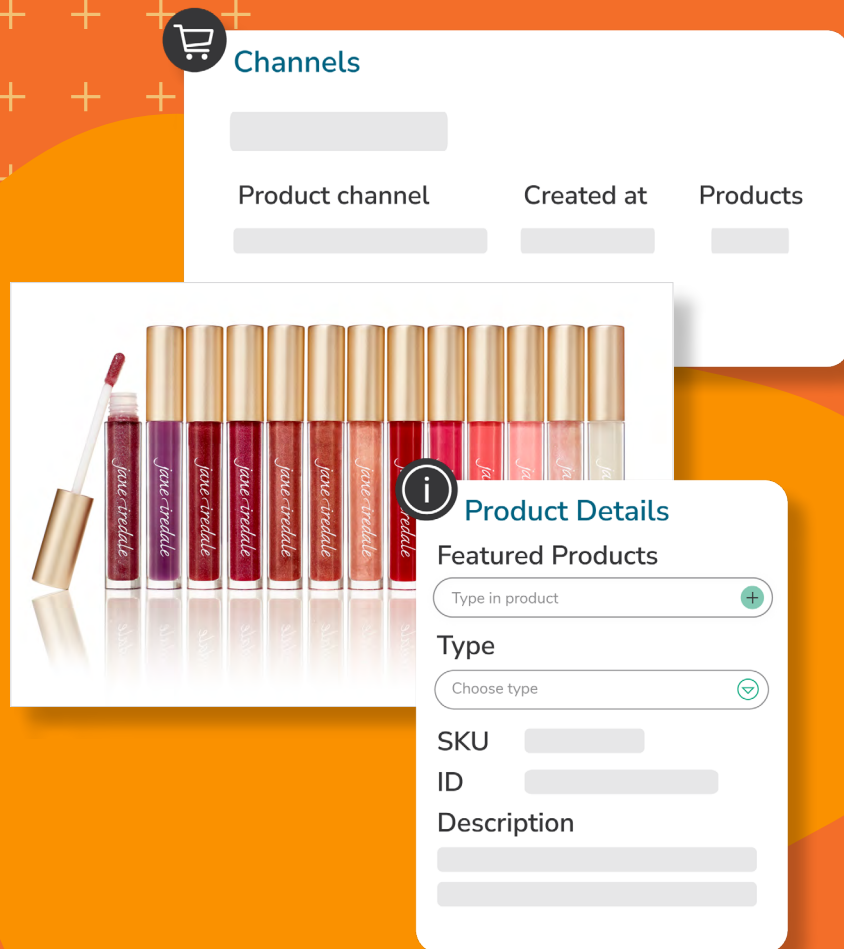


Inconsistent product data attributes/descriptions



The use of PIM platforms is on the rise

Despite the prevalence of outdated technologies such as spreadsheets (used by 43% of respondents) for managing product data, tools like Product Information Management (PIM) systems are gaining traction. About one-third of content teams now use a PIM to streamline the organization and storage of product data.



How is PRODUCT INFORMATION managed, organized, and stored at your organization?

Spreadsheets (e.g., Excel, Google Sheets)

43%

Website content management system (CMS)

39%

Internal built system

33%

Product Information Management (PIM) system

32%

E-commerce platforms (e.g., Shopify, Amazon)

32%

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system

25%

No formal tool

6%

1 Top Performers

Those with the most significant increases in content ROI are over **2x** more likely than others to leverage a PIM for product information storage and organization.

The Power Couple: DAM + PIM

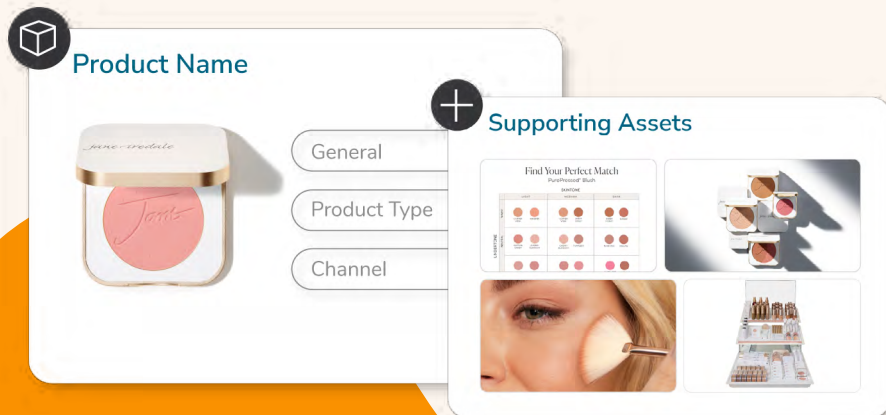
Organizations that use both a DAM and a product information management system achieve significantly better results in their content management, storage, and distribution compared to those using neither. This group is 2x more likely to describe consistent branding, effective content distribution, and content repurposing as extremely easy. Additionally, they report greater ease in measuring content performance, collaborating on content, and locating assets than those without these tools.

DAM and PIM working together is the ultimate duo to help brands that sell products stay consistent across channels, easily distribute their content, and effectively manage their product details.

Canto PIM is a unique solution, designed to help brands simplify their tech stacks and streamline everything from content creation to product delivery, all from one platform.

Interested in the all-in-one solution that enables brands to achieve efficiency, consistency, and scalability?

[Explore Canto PIM here.](#)



% of those who find it extremely easy to do the following:

■ DAM + PIM users ■ Not using DAM or PIM

Maintaining brand consistency

37%

18%

Effective and compliant content distribution to the right audience

35%

17%

Repurposing content/assets

32%

15%

Locating the right asset at the right time

31%

18%

Collaboration on content

29%

21%

Measuring and analyzing content performance

28%

15%



Content Workflows

The importance of optimizing workflows

Inefficient workflows can be costly for content teams, with 45% of those surveyed reporting a loss of productivity as a result of workflow-related challenges. Others report experiencing consequences such as inefficiencies, wasted time, and wasted budget due to workflow issues. These challenges also impact creativity, collaboration, and even talent retention.

We have seen upticks in the rate of organizations experiencing these challenges from previous years. Content teams surveyed this year are more likely to report experiencing a loss of productivity (45% vs 38%), wasted budget (35% vs 32%), and brand dilution (23% vs 18%) than in years past.

Which of the following have you experienced as a **CONSEQUENCE** of workflow-related challenges?

| | |
|--|-----|
| Loss of productivity | 45% |
| Inefficiencies/wasted time | 41% |
| Wasted budget | 35% |
| Lag time in getting content to market | 34% |
| Lack of creativity/collaboration | 31% |
| Errors or delivering incorrect content to market | 24% |
| Brand dilution | 23% |
| Loss of valuable talent/staff | 22% |
| None of the above | 6% |



DAM Users

Teams using a DAM are less likely to experience inefficiencies and wasted time as a consequence of workflow-related challenges, signaling smoother, more productive workflows than those without a DAM (**36% vs. 43%**).



Content organization

Effective content workflows rely heavily on how efficiently team members can access the assets they need, when they need them. However, challenges like disorganized folder structure, content silos, a lack of version control plague one-third of teams surveyed. Another third report issues with duplicate or outdated assets and limited access or permissions in their content library.

What are your top challenges associated with ACCESSING RELEVANT ASSETS in your content library?

Disorganized folder structure

34%

Content stored in different locations across teams

33%

Lack of version control

33%

Duplicate or outdated assets

32%

Limited access/permissions

32%

Lack of consistency with metadata and tagging

31%

Lack of standardization in file naming

30%

Limited search functionality

29%



Team Size

As content teams grow, so do the challenges with access to content. Teams with larger numbers of employees, who likely have more content to manage, tend to face more significant challenges related to content silos, search functionality, and maintaining consistency with metadata and tagging. Smaller teams face fewer issues overall but still encounter specific difficulties in version control and file organization.

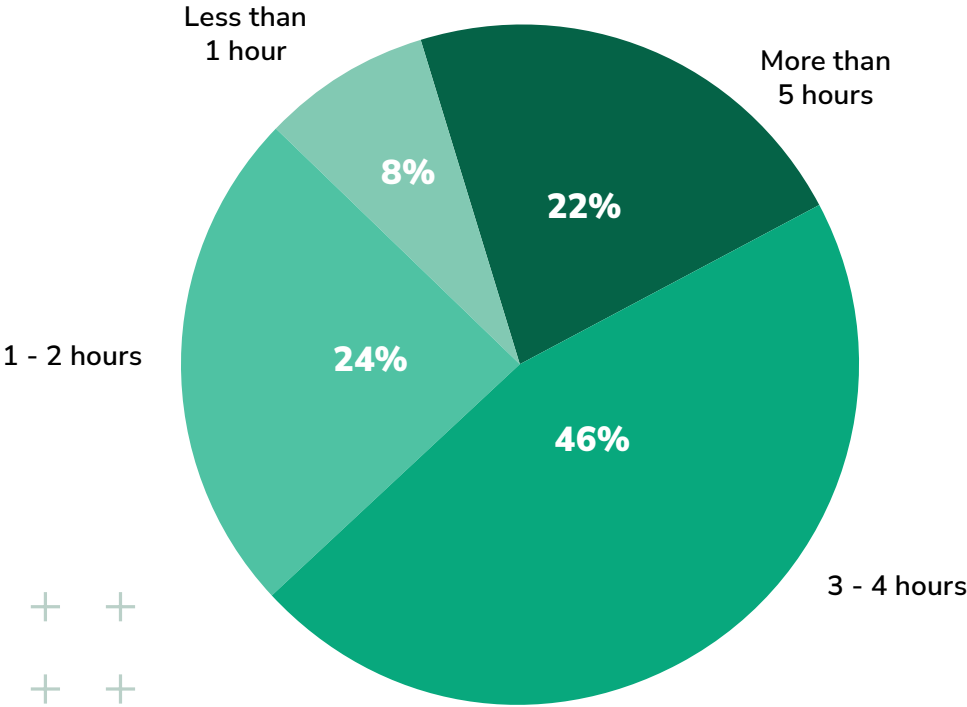




The hidden costs of disorganization

Content teams are spending substantial time locating the assets they need to execute programs, with 68% reporting they spend over 3 hours per week on this task. This is consistent with last year's data, where 66% reported similar time investments. Improving asset organization and search functionality could save teams valuable hours weekly, freeing up resources for content creation and optimization rather than asset retrieval.

How much TIME PER WEEK do you estimate your team spends trying to LOCATE ASSETS needed to execute content programs?



Enable collaboration for better content workflows

Content professionals feel that better content organization and more effective cross-team collaboration would significantly enhance their overall output. Over one-third would benefit from less manual work, like entering metadata and assigning tasks. These improvements, along with insights into content usage, transparency into available assets, and updated technology, would save time, reduce friction, and boost the quality of content production.

Which of the following would most IMPROVE your team's content production and management WORKFLOWS?

Better organization of content

42%

Better collaboration between teams

40%

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

35%

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

33%

Transparency into available/approved assets

31%

Improving brand management

30%

Replace/update/consolidate technology

22%



DAM Users

DAM solutions enable collaboration. DAM users find collaboration easier. **77%** of content teams using a DAM solution find collaboration on content to be easy, compared to **68%** of those not using a DAM. The right DAM solution can centralize content and help teams streamline creative workflows from ideation to publication.

The Canto DAM platform is designed with collaboration at its core. With features like automatic metadata generation, AI-powered search, advanced collaboration tools, and streamlined integration with over 40 popular platforms, it empowers teams to stay aligned and maintain smooth, synchronized workflows.

Discover what your teams could achieve together with Canto's platform [here](#).




How to enhance content ROI

Content teams are driven to make content creation more efficient, integrated, and impactful across channels. Collaboration and improved workflows are among the top priorities for content teams in the coming year as they work to improve content ROI. This aligns closely with the fact that 84% of those surveyed say that improving collaboration in their content strategy will be important in the coming year. Enhancing cross-platform performance tracking and reporting and content personalization will also be top of mind in the year ahead for over one-third of those surveyed.

In the coming year, what areas would you like to IMPROVE to enhance your content ROI?

| | |
|---|-----|
| Streamlining workflows for faster content creation and distribution | 36% |
| Improving team collaboration for cohesive content strategies | 36% |
| Enhancing cross-platform performance tracking and reporting | 35% |
| Personalizing content for different audience segments | 35% |
| Improving measurement of content impact and ROI | 33% |
| Enhancing content quality to align with brand and audience | 31% |
| Expanding content distribution to new channels/platforms | 31% |
| Increasing automation to reduce manual tasks | 30% |
| Integrating content management and analytics tools | 28% |
| None of the above | 2% |

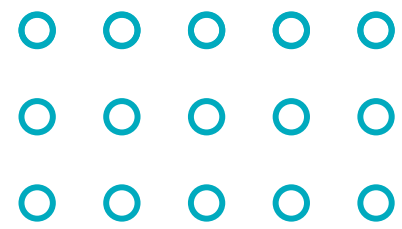


Top Performers

Nearly half of our Top Performers group will be working to streamline workflows (**46%**) and enhance cross-platform performance tracking (**47%**)



Evaluating Content Impact



Metrics used to measure

The metrics most commonly used to determine digital content effectiveness or content ROI are audience engagement and brand awareness. 43% report using KPIs such as website traffic and conversion rates, as well as quality and relevance of content for their target audience. About one-third measure content ROI through production and distribution costs, while 39% consider sales revenue and other financial KPIs.



Top Performers

Those who saw the most significant increase in content ROI last year are more likely to use quality and relevance of content (**58% vs 40%**) as a metric to determine content success. KPIs like website traffic, conversion rates, and lead generation (**56% vs 41%**) and the costs to produce and distribute content (**42% vs 32%**) are also more likely to be used by our 'Top Performers' group.

What METRICS do you use to determine your digital content effectiveness/content ROI?

Audience engagement

48%

Brand awareness

47%

KPIs like website traffic, conversion rates, and lead generation

43%

Quality and relevance of content for your target audience

43%

Sales revenue and other financial KPIs

39%

Costs to produce and distribute the content

34%



Challenges to overcome

Content teams face significant challenges in measuring digital content performance, with limited resources, inconsistent metrics across platforms, and lack of collaboration across teams among the top barriers. By centralizing assets, content teams can streamline resource use, align teams and data, and provide consistent, accessible metrics across platforms.

What challenges do you encounter when MEASURING digital content performance and ROI?

Limited resources

36%

Inconsistent metrics across platforms

36%

Lack of collaboration across teams/functions

34%

Changing customer behavior

33%

Content production/distribution costs

31%

Inability to measure brand awareness

29%

Attribution of content

28%



Tip

Canto's solutions support content teams in tracking and maximizing the ROI of their digital content more efficiently and effectively. Users of a DAM solution like Canto see more value and better outcomes from their content. [Learn more](#) about how Canto's centralized content hub and AI-driven platform can empower your team to make your content work harder for you.





The benefits of measuring content performance

Only one in five (20%) professionals surveyed report that measuring and analyzing content performance is extremely easy. This group that has optimized their ability to measure and analyze the performance of their content and content ROI experiences better results. Those that find measuring content performance to be extremely easy are...



More likely to be DAM users than not. 40% report the use of a DAM vs 32% of all others.



More likely to expect increases in content volume in the coming year than all others. (43% vs 18% expect significant increases).



More likely to expect increases in budget for content in the coming year. (36% vs 19% expect significant increases).



Less likely to report experiencing inefficiencies and wasted time, loss of productivity, and lag time in getting content to market due to workflow-related challenges.



More likely to have experienced significant ROI increases in the last year. 42% vs 13% had significant increases in revenue last year.



Red Flag

Almost a quarter (**24%**) of content professionals say they lack the necessary tools and expertise to maximize the ROI of their digital content. However, those using DAM systems are far more confident, with **37%** feeling they have the right resources compared to only **19%** of non-users. Confidence is even higher among those who use both DAM and PIM solutions, with **42%** strongly agreeing they have the tools and expertise they need, versus just **16%** of those using neither.



Participants

n = 423 Content and Creative Professionals

Region

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| United States | 64% |
| United Kingdom | 36% |

Industry

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| Construction | 6% |
| Manufacturing | 8% |
| Retail | 20% |
| Education | 8% |
| Travel & Hospitality | 3% |
| Non-profit | 3% |
| Technology | 14% |
| Healthcare | 7% |
| Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) | 3% |
| Ad Agency | 5% |
| Sports | 2% |
| Other | 21% |

Content Team Size (Number of employees contributing to content and creative production)

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| 5 or fewer | 11% |
| 6 - 10 | 18% |
| 11 - 20 | 18% |
| More than 20 | 53% |

Methodology

Ascend2 conducts benchmark research on business strategies, along with the tactics and technologies that drive them. For this study, Ascend2, in partnership with Canto, surveyed 423 professionals via a custom online questionnaire. These respondents self-identified as being involved in their organization's content and creative asset production, management, distribution, or strategy. Participants represented companies with 50+ employees across varying industries and marketing channels in the United States and the United Kingdom. The survey was conducted in October 2024.

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 a variety of industry verticals, including retail, manufacturing, education, transportation, hospitality, nonprofit, healthcare, food and beverage, technology and more. Canto's corporate headquarters is in Atlanta, with offices in Berlin, Germany, and a regional hub in Sydney, Australia. For more information, visit www.canto.com.



Companies partner with Ascend2 to create original research from survey conceptualization through report and content creation to media outreach. Ascend2 helps companies fuel marketing content, generate leads, and engage prospects to drive demand through the middle of the funnel. For more about Ascend, visit www.ascend2.com.

