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STRATEGIC GUIDE TO DAM METADATA

WHY DID WE CREATE A BEST PRACTICE GUIDE ON DAM METADATA?

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While it may seem trivial on the surface, we've actually found through hundreds of conversations with the largest brands in the world that they have under-utilized or messy instances of their DAM and respective metadata. They know and admit it's valuable but they've had a hard time getting the metadata right - from definition to process and creation. Because of these issues, our experts got together to create guidance on how to get the most out of your DAM's metadata.

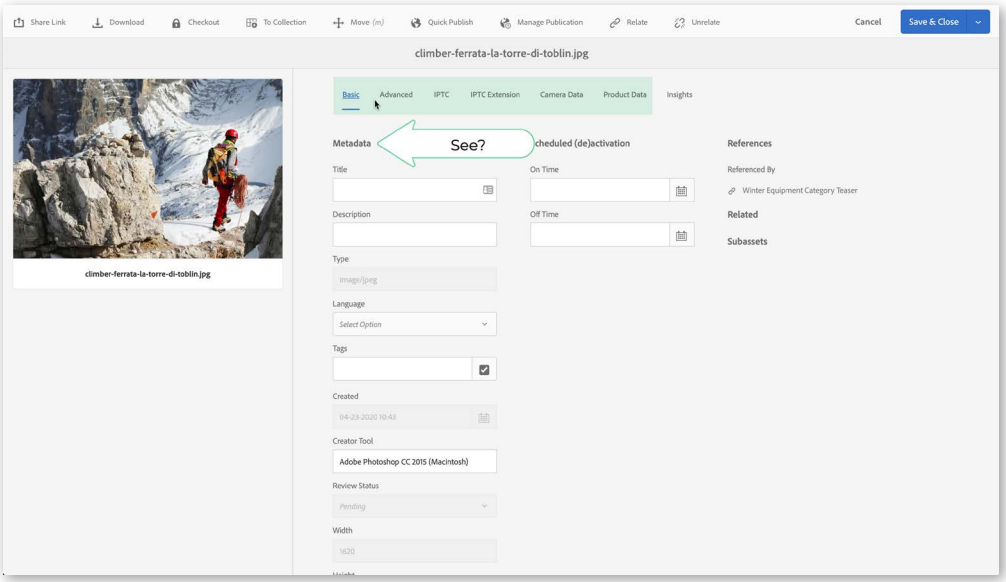
We believe by the end of the guide you'll see some incredibly practical and valuable applications for creating thorough DAM metadata.

A PRIMER ON DAM METADATA

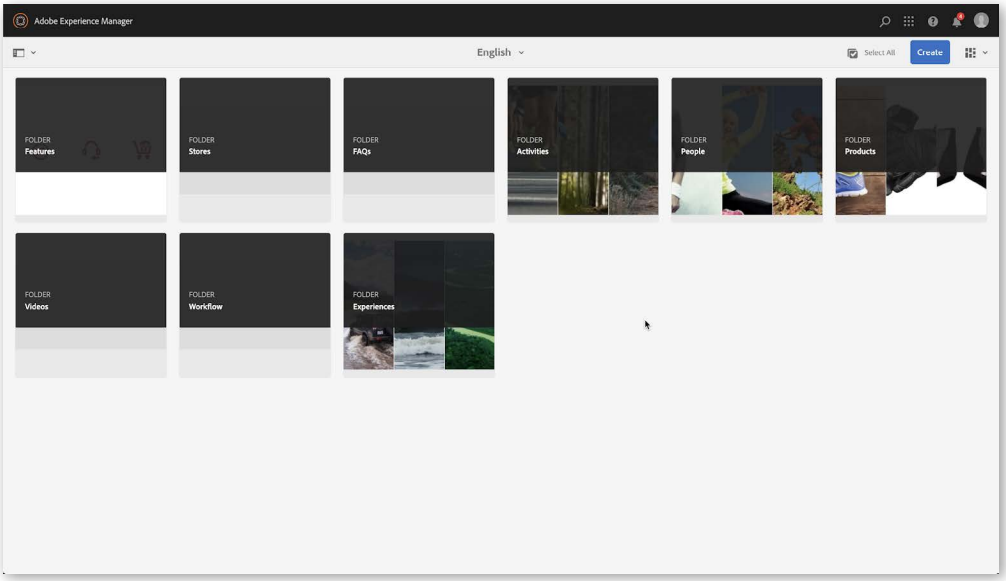
Enterprise digital asset management (DAM) is an exploding category due to the proliferation of digital mediums and growth in consumer digital use. "Estimated to grow from USD 2.44 billion in 2017 to USD 5.66 billion by 2022, at a CAGR of 18.3% considering the tremendous growth in digital assets across different industry verticals", DAM has become an absolutely fundamental technology in the enterprise tech stack. (Source: Markets and Markets DAM Report)

There are plenty of options out there for DAMs and this guide is not a buyer's guide. Instead, this guide will explain an often overlooked and underused component of DAMs that prove rather valuable to an organization when implemented correctly: metadata.

DAM metadata is all of the data about your digital media assets. It is all of the descriptions and attributes of the content itself, whether it be a webpage, image, product listing, video, audio, or other pieces of content that are stored in centralized repositories within these enterprise DAM solutions. The enterprise DAM lets organizations that produce large quantities of rich media to create, manage, and reuse their media including images, videos, and other digital assets.

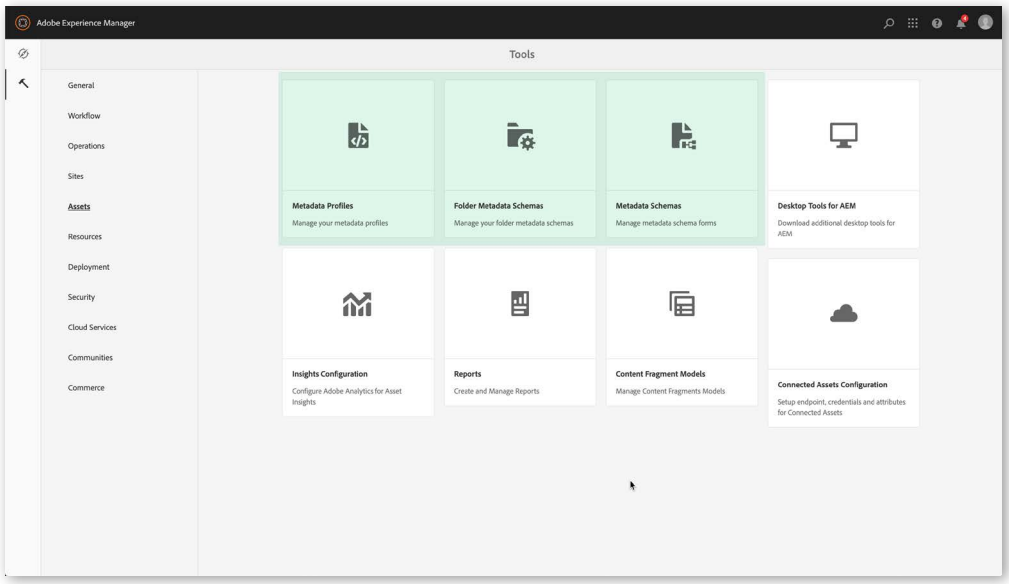


For example, the tabs on this image (stored in Adobe Experience Manager Assets) are sections of metadata

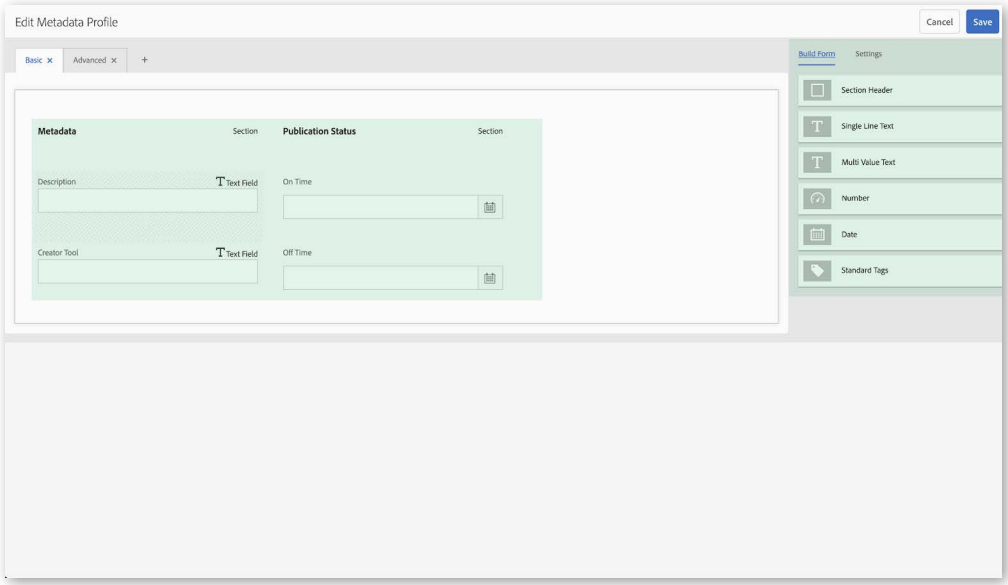


And this image is just one of potentially thousands (or hundreds of thousands) of digital media assets stored in your DAM

As you can see between the number of potential metadata fields combined with the number of total assets, that's a lot of metadata to deal with. No wonder it's underused and overlooked - it's a daunting task.



To make matters even more complex, the metadata tabs shared in the image above are just the "out of the box" ones. There are other places to customize metadata even further.



This can include completely customized metadata profiles depending on your organization or department's specific needs

Clearly it is quite the task to define, align, and manage all of this metadata. Nevertheless, it needs to be done.

WHY IS METADATA IMPORTANT?

Considering how much metadata is possible and all of the work that goes into creating and managing that metadata, you're probably wondering how does not completing all of this metadata impact my customer's experience or bottom-line?

We've identified 5 ways missing metadata is detrimental to your marketing and sales efforts. There are likely more but these have clear negative impacts on your digital performance:

1. **Lack of complete indexing and findability in your enterprise DAM and customer-facing search functionality**
2. **Decreased visibility and key information available on external search engines and social platforms**
3. **Poor accessibility for people with disabilities**
4. **Sub-optimal display of content within your own managed digital experiences**
5. **Lost opportunities within recommendation engines and dynamic related content**

A detailed explanation of each of these 5 issues is available in the article entitled "The Importance of Complete Content Metadata".

Poor experiences in any of the above areas are going to cost your organization money - whether it's wasted time by your internal team members looking for assets (or creating duplicate ones) or a poor customer experience that kills online conversions.

WHAT OBSTACLES DO ORGANIZATIONS FACE WITH THEIR DAM METADATA?

There are a few obstacles that organizations bump into when dealing with DAM metadata:

No standardized language or naming conventions for metadata values

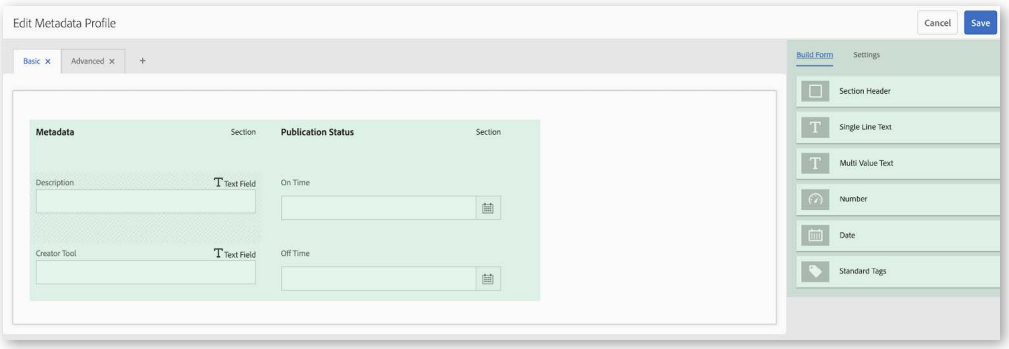
No workflows or governance to complete metadata requirements

Inefficiencies within DAMs themselves for bulk management of metadata

LET ME EXPOUND ON EACH:

No standardized language or naming conventions for metadata values

Many organizations don't always take the time to create a common language nor enforce naming conventions on almost anything, let alone dozens (or more) of metadata fields. And frankly, DAMs don't generally provide the functionality to enforce a common language or standardized values.



Revisiting the metadata profile builder shared above, you can see that most of this is free form data users can enter

There are no picklists or other guidance on how the values should be formatted. This is an inherent flaw in the digital asset management process.

Some organizations may have an external taxonomy/ontology system (at best) that has these rules but it's not synced to the DAM to automate enforcement. Other organizations may have a master shared spreadsheet, which is common but inefficient and impossible to sync with a DAM.

Regardless of where the shared metadata language repository is, it is still a manual process for users to check and create the values - clearly a point for ongoing errors.

No workflows or governance to complete metadata requirements

We alluded to this one above but these systems don't generally have an automated process or wizard to more efficiently create the metadata for each asset, including a governance process aside from perhaps the basic "this field is required" option.

Further, there's no interconnectedness to metadata sets so that if a value is entered in one field, the system knows to proliferate related metadata automatically into that digital asset.

There's also no notification system or checks and balances for inconsistent or missing values. There are enough content directors out there who'd agree that getting alerts and summaries on newly created digital assets to audit them would be a huge benefit.

Inefficiencies within DAMs themselves for bulk management of metadata

As mentioned in the beginning of this guide, the multiplying factors, # of assets * # of metadata schemas * # of metadata fields, leads to an enormous amount of metadata to be managed. Let's say you have just 1,000 digital assets (which is low by most standards), 3 metadata schemas each with 7 metadata fields. That's 21,000 data points - again, a low sample scenario.

Incredibly, there are DAMs that don't address this with any type of bulk editor. One, that makes it very difficult to even find errors en masse and two, the ability to fix them. Again, this is another inherent flaw in a DAM.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS FOR GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR DAM METADATA

We've explained that there's a lot of metadata to create, a handful of reasons why it's important, and the challenges organizations have with the process itself. Considering the depth and value of metadata, how does an organization actually make use of it?

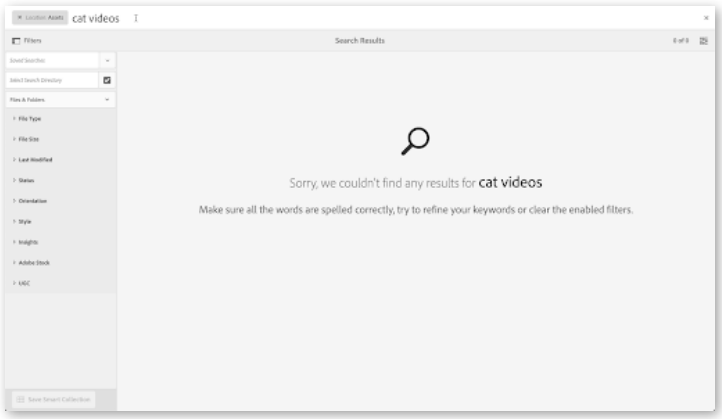
We know of at least six clear ways to do so:

- **Internal DAM search:** Thorough metadata makes it easier for your users to search and find the digital assets they need
- **Site search/filter applications:** Thorough metadata also makes sure that customer-facing filtering and search utilities are as effective as possible
- **Customer-facing presentation layer:** The metadata creates a more comprehensive presentation layer, e.g. metadata on product listings
- **Data layer optimization:** If you make use of the data layer for passing values to execution and analytics systems, metadata gets stored in the data layer
- **Search engine optimization:** If your digital asset is web crawlable, the metadata enriches the SEO value
- **Content/audience matching:** If your digital assets are tagged sufficiently, and your campaign data is as well, you can match the right piece of content with the right audience

Here's a deeper exploration of each.

Internal DAM search

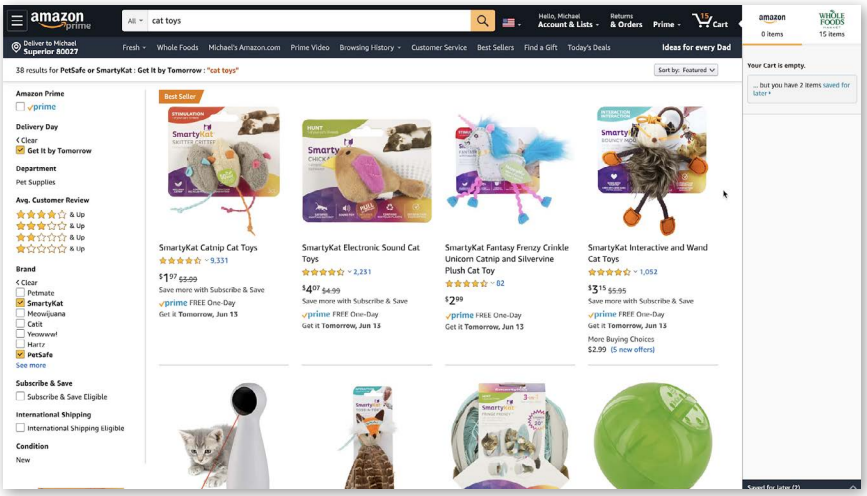
One of the most common problems with the content creation process is a duplication of efforts - and that's often because people can't find what they are looking for. And they can't find what they were looking for because there were no standards in creating the file name or respective metadata. Therefore, internal DAM searches come up empty even when the file likely exists.

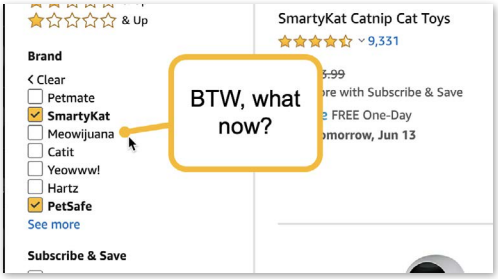


By requiring and standardizing your asset metadata, you're going to save your team significant time. They'll spend less time searching for assets and more importantly, less time doing work that's already been done.

Site search/filter applications

Site and faceted search tools have become an essential functionality to websites especially businesses that are large catalog e-commerce sites as well as large media sites.





Every product in your catalog has metadata (commonly referred to as attributes) and they are attached to the filters and faceted searches. If metadata is overlooked, key products may be missing when your user selects a specific search selector.

Customer-facing presentation layer

Not all metadata lives behind the scenes for search utilities - it is presented front and center on pages and product listings. For example, image captions or attribution may be enabled on your site but if you've forgotten to enter the caption metadata value, it won't be disabled. You may have a requirement to attribute your images and missing this could cause legal issues.

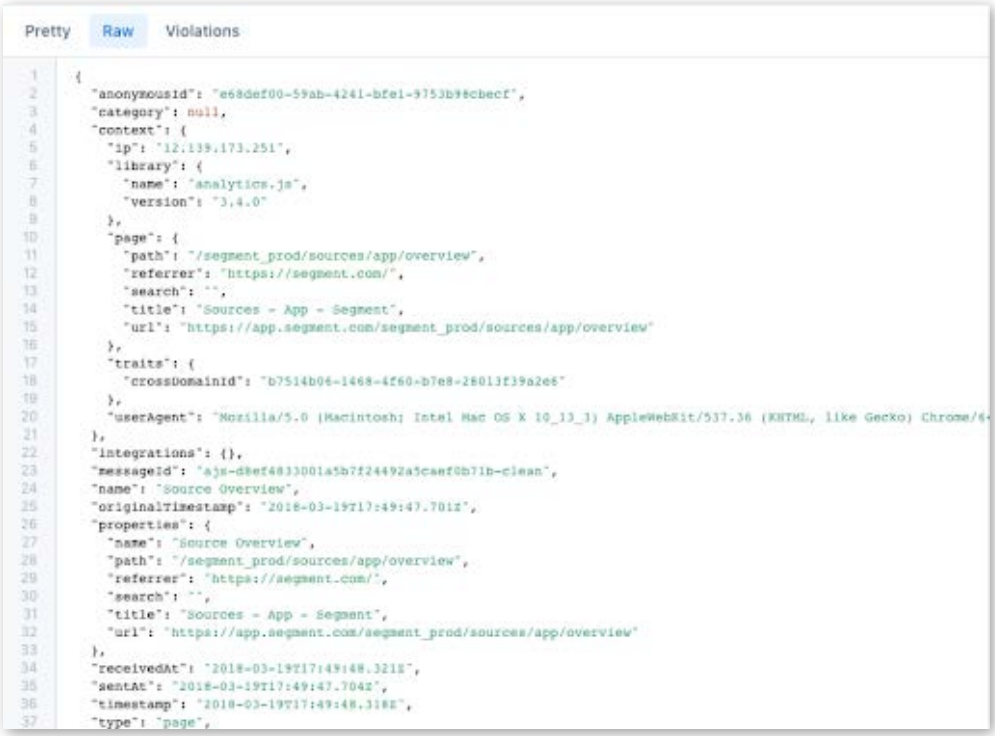
Also, part of the presentation layer is the accessibility portion mentioned above. Entering complete metadata also improves the site experience for people with disabilities - even if it's not content displayed to the visible eye. Adding Alt text on images and video captioning are two obvious examples.

For example, here's a section on adding CC Closed Captioning to dynamic videos in AEM Assets. While a more complex topic, you point to an independent URL that contains the document necessary to show the captions. We would consider this a metadata value about and attached to the video asset and, if missing, can create a poor presentation experience for someone requiring closed captioning.

Data layer optimization

An important and significant amount of metadata is used via the data layer as well. This sometimes can even be unseen data to the visitor but important information that needs to be passed to analytics and execution systems. Just to note, when we talk of the “data layer”, here is a Google Tag Manager example and an Adobe Launch example.

For organizations that have prioritized a first-party data strategy, especially around a user registration process, the data layer becomes exponentially more valuable. If you have an authenticated user, event-based actions can be enriched via the data layer. And that data layer is enriched via the metadata you create on the respective page and associated digital assets.



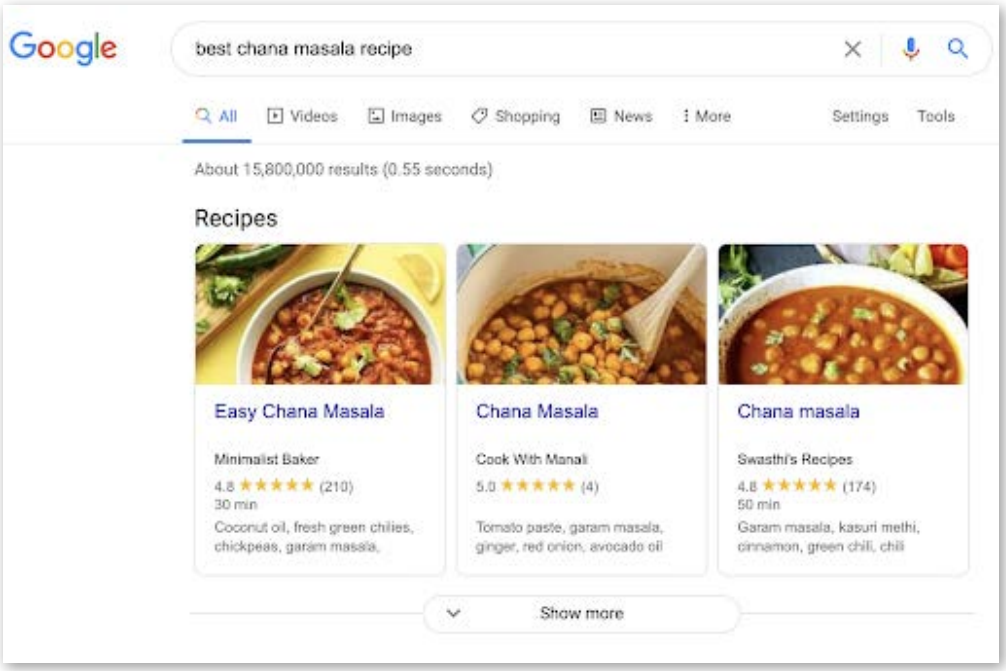
Here you can see a sample payload from the data layer

This is an example of basic information grabbed from the data layer but if custom metadata is available on the page, combined with some javascript/tag manager functionality, you can retrieve and send that metadata along to your systems of choice.

We’ve seen it implemented most commonly in e-commerce environments where savvy companies want to both track performance in behavioral analytics platforms and store user attributes for re-use in personalized experiences.

Search engine optimization

If you're familiar with SEO, you are likely aware of Schema.org - a collection of blueprints and standards for structured data that you implement in your site code to better describe site objects. The major search engines use this structured data to display different results and features in the SERPs (search engine results pages). There are a slew of schema options on schema.org with the most popular being products, events, locations, creative works and reviews. You can see the magnitude of options here.



You see this regularly when you search for new recipes

Those elements displayed in Google are there because they wrapped in very specific schema (from Schema.org) that tell Google explicitly what the object is and it's respective metadata. Some DAMs (more so CMSes) can take advantage of a schema like this for improved search listings and performance. Each system is different however and the technical complexities of implementing schema.org in a DAM or CMS are beyond the scope of this guide.

Aside from specifically using schema.org, for any webpage you want to rank on the search engines, having ample metadata on those pages only helps.

Content/audience matching

This one use case is both significant in value and complexity - an advanced example of using metadata that we only see from the most progressive and technically skilled organizations. In this example, campaign and content metadata are intertwined - campaign metadata is attached to a consumer's initial engagement and then matched up to the respective DAM metadata so that the target audience is also shown the proper digital assets.

The importance of this is primarily for enabling machine learning to kick-in and truly deliver complex personalized experiences at scale. Imagine a campaign that has metadata that has well-defined demographic information about the audience. When someone engages in this campaign, that demographic/interest metadata flows through to a landing page or in-app experience.

This campaign metadata is referenced and matched against respective content metadata, for example looking for the precise video to present to someone that fits, say 7 specific demographic/interest criteria points. A campaign audience member could be a married African American woman, age 34, who is also a mother, interested in yoga, located in New York City. Your experience platform detects all of this metadata information, references it against your thoroughly tagged DAM content and serves up a specific video for her.

This is the future of digital experiences - and it happens in large part because of the effective use of metadata.

CONCLUSION

There is great growth happening in the digital asset management space and as you can see there are important and practical applications of DAM metadata that any organization can make use of.

There are also considerable problems that can occur if you don't use your metadata correctly. However, there is serious effort required to implement a standardized program for your DAM metadata. So, while rewarding in many ways, it takes effective and lasting leadership to effectively instill an ongoing focus on the use and benefit of DAM metadata.

Want to learn how Claravine helps make all of this happen? Get Started