

PRODUCT | ARTICLE

7 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR PRODUCT ASSET MANAGEMENT: A NUXEO GUIDE

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WHAT'S HOLDING BACK ACCELERATION?

At trend-driven product companies, one core business process predicts success or failure: new product development. According to McKinsey, top-performing product companies in the fashion industry can deliver a product to market in fewer than six to eight weeks — far faster than the typical industry lead time of 40 weeks.

Scaling and accelerating product development has proven difficult for many of the world's largest companies. The biggest problem holding back these efforts is the tangled web of the product development process.

Creating hundreds (or more) new SKUs every season relies on many teams working on many processes, from material selection and product photography to in-market distribution and promotion. Optimizing interlinked processes one by one, however, rarely accelerates the end-to-end, design-to-shelf timeline enough to transform the business's competitive position.

MASTERING THE CREATIVE CONTENT LIFECYCLE

For product-driven companies looking to become agile market leaders, it's time to think beyond piecemeal solutions and stopgap measures that only put one piece of the puzzle in place.

Let's take a look at the role of creative content in the holistic design-to-shelf lifecycle that we call product asset management (PAM).

The process starts with materials that drive product design, which is in turn used to make samples that are used in product photography and creative content development. This content will be stored and distributed in content hubs and portals when the product is in-market. For each step of the process, we will discuss key challenges and opportunities for acceleration and streamlining.

1 Materials, formulations and ingredients

Whether your business depends on ingredients, formulations, fabrics or parts, shorter product design cycles can start at the very beginning — with the basic materials used to make products.

Today, information about materials isn't always easy to find, even for the teams who depend on it most.

One major manufacturer of apparel and footwear told Hyland that textures for materials could be difficult for designers to find. With legacy systems in place, designers could access the name, color and supplier of a material, but they didn't know which textures were available for each brand or season.

3D texture maps and other types of complex objects are critical components of today's materials libraries. Teams use 3D scanning technology to bring each product component (like buttons and zippers in apparel) into environments that allow designers to configure and experiment with color and material.

Legacy systems haven't been able to keep up with these new, complex object types. And they are often stored in different systems with low visibility and connectivity between silos. The future of materials libraries involves connecting these disparate sources of information into a unified, contextualized view — to give teams the freedom to tinker, experiment and iterate until they've created the next big success.

Hyland's Nuxeo Platform empowers product companies to create materials libraries that make every downstream stage easier and faster. Imagine the power of seeing the downstream impacts of previous design choices — or being able to instantly determine when a component is temporarily or permanently unavailable due to supply chain issues.

With the Hyland Nuxeo Platform, the connected approach continues to pay dividends as the product asset management cycle continues.

2 Product design, prototyping and sell-in

After upstream teams make new materials available in the materials library, designers can start the process of applying those materials to new styles and designs.

Product design workflows are highly iterated and vary significantly across industries. In mass-market apparel and footwear, for example, designers select textiles and other materials from a list. Then they prototype ideas, first within the design team, and as they are refined, with broader and broader circles internally and eventually with retail customers.

In the old world of information silos, these material lists were maintained manually, always out of date and missing critical information like visual swatches and up-to-date volumes available. This traditional approach is extremely time-consuming and inefficient — which is why product companies today are changing it at the speed of digital modernization.

When teams rely on physical samples, time-consuming manual processes put designers and downstream product teams out of step with one another. Designs are sent for prototype production, and by the time the prototype is ready for review (usually several weeks later), modifications have already been requested by another team, or a material is no longer available. New samples must be ordered with alterations to accommodate these changes, as well as any changes made after reviewing the prototype.

Wholesalers face an additional round of review and iteration with their retail customers. These changes during sell-in can have major impacts on profitability and time to market when each small, iterative change requires new sample production and review.



With the Hyland Nuxeo Platform, businesses can accelerate prototyping and sell-in to drive faster, more responsive design cycles. With full control over materials libraries and relevant data on cost, availability and product appearance, Hyland's Nuxeo Platform makes it possible for design teams to have confidence in their materials choices, for less rework and faster design cycles.

Design files can be kept connected and contextualized in their master formats, as well as easy-to-share formats for quick review and approval by people without access to design tools. With automated, configurable workflows and built-in annotation capabilities, approval cycles take less time and involve less rework.

Digitization creates new avenues of opportunity for acceleration. With 3D sample design and digital showrooming, changes can be viewed and tested without the need for physical prototyping cycles. A retailer wants the same shirt, but in blue? Make the necessary changes in moments, not months.

As product information continues to flow downstream, having a complete history of design revisions — including notes about why changes were made — helps other creative content producers better understand which product features to highlight.

3 Photo studio and product photography

Once final samples are created by upstream teams, the flow continues downstream, to teams responsible for creating product photography and video. Product information and required product shot requests move to internal and external photo studios, and the high output photography process begins.

Despite the highly structured nature of product photography, many companies haven't fully automated the process. They rely on extensive manual data tracking, with complicated approval and review processes handled with printouts and email. Tracking every product shot can be difficult — especially when products are shot on models, where angles and poses aren't always completely consistent.

Hyland's Nuxeo Platform automates these workflows and gives teams the flexibility to fully connect every product shot to product information, model talent records and requested shots.

With a platform that connects content throughout the creative life cycle, searching for product images and video has never been easier. Lightning-fast search capabilities, plus automated check-in/check-out for assets, make it easy to collaborate cross-functionally with upstream, downstream and regional teams, even when your files are distributed in repositories around the globe.



4 Campaign creative development

Omnichannel marketing strategies require a greater variety of digital assets and creative content than ever before, from print and web ads to catalog copy, lifestyle images and influencer marketing materials. At many product companies, campaign creative development exists in a series of silos, disconnected from both upstream and downstream processes.

These silos make creative content slower to produce and harder to move downstream. Working in disconnected groups, internal and external creative teams can only easily search for content in their own systems. Some content is created again and again, by teams who don't know they're duplicating efforts.

When content loses context due to tools that only work for one phase of the creative life cycle, teams are caught in the middle, trying to connect information.

Marketing teams send detailed briefs to external agencies, but these briefs are often not maintained with the content that is returned. This leaves marketers unsure whether the content produced aligns with the original requests in the brief and other teams completely unaware of it and unable to reuse it.

Without workflow automation to accelerate creative review, approval processes require manual handoffs. In some companies, teams are still printing out layout options for approvers without Illustrator. Version control is impossible to maintain when information is stored piecemeal, as multiple versions are sent out over email, Slack and Dropbox. Confusion reigns during many approval processes, with incorrect versions of material being used and passed on to downstream processes.

Hyland's Nuxeo Platform adds upstream context to this part of the creative lifecycle and builds on that context as new assets are developed, approved and moved into downstream applications.

Now, companies can see briefs and other information connected to each asset and product. Approval processes can involve complex workflows across multiple departments, with the most important information for each reviewer highlighted for faster approvals.

Marketers can also connect all associated assets (including video, images and product copy) to product information, giving downstream teams more ability than ever to build connected, omnichannel campaigns.

5**Packaging development**

From design to global regulatory requirements, manufacturing and product information — developing packaging involves complicated business processes working together.

Typically, solutions geared toward marketing departments for controlling and managing assets haven't connected to other relevant processes and systems. For this reason, packaging design teams have been unable to rely on traditional digital asset management (DAM) solutions.

What if packaging designers didn't have to operate as a manual nexus between several different functions? What if every person involved in the packaging design, review and approval process could see the information they needed, with full automation for even the most complex workflows spanning multiple legacy systems?

With Hyland's Nuxeo Platform, content and data can be federated from a number of different systems, allowing automation and atomization of different

parts of the packaging process. Ingredient lists can be automatically extracted from product information management (PIM) or master data management (MDM) systems to appear on packaging layouts, eliminating the possibility of errors caused by manually entering copy. Regional business units can quickly customize packaging with different colors, models or product labeling for regulatory compliance.

Hyland's Nuxeo Platform supports all file types, and its open, pluggable architecture makes it easy to integrate the unique viewers and rendering engines used by packaging designers and engineers. Complex object support makes it possible for these designers to collaborate more effectively with their colleagues in creative design.

Legal compliance review processes can also be automated with the Hyland Nuxeo Platform's easy, configurable workflow design studio, and can take place in parallel with creative and design reviews to reduce cycle times and decrease time to market.



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Content hubs and portals

With manufacturing complete, the product moves toward store shelves as creative assets move from draft to published status. As some upstream processes reach their conclusion, a range of new, information-hungry stakeholders enter the scene.

Marketers, sales personnel and retailers rely on up-to-date, accurate product information to make critical decisions about how products are displayed to customers. Teams in these fast-moving roles don't have time to search through many different systems for the information they need.

In the absence of easily accessible upstream information, salespeople may try to piece together what they need from Google, potentially finding older information that doesn't apply to a newer version of a product. Social media marketers assembling campaigns from available creative materials may have to search through several different repositories to find what they're looking for, or run their own creative photoshoots. Doing all of this, they can still miss out on a perfect product lifestyle shot for the new Twitter campaign because it was in yet another location.

When Hyland talked to some of the largest product companies in the world, we found that many retailer content hubs allow the same access for all retailers — without regard to, for instance, whether Kroger supermarkets only stock particular product lines, while Safeway stocks others. For many legacy systems, configuring access for individual retailers would be a time-consuming, difficult process requiring manual setting of permissions.

Hyland's Nuxeo Platform reimagines the process of discovering content, with a platform that gives businesses full flexibility to create new content hubs and portals tailored to the needs of different internal and external stakeholders.

Using the solution, a content hub for retailers can link into inventory and product information systems, for secure access to brand images and information only for the specific products the retailer has purchased. Another hub could be created for social media marketers or PR agencies, displaying influencer product mentions in a Pinterest-style board for easy visibility and image selection.

Teams can do all this and more with the Hyland Nuxeo Platform, without individually configuring permissions or manually adding assets to the hub.

Instead, products can automatically enter the hub or portal when specific actions are taken (Macy's buys the shirt, so it enters the Macy's retailer portal) or when approval processes are complete.

With a fully configurable UI, the Hyland Nuxeo Platform enables each of these different teams to create portals and hubs that work in totally different ways, with a look and feel designed to put their needs first. The one thing all of these content hubs have in common is they can connect information across business systems to put information in the right context at the right time.

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Product knowledge management

Content-hungry processes don't stop when products hit store shelves or e-commerce sites. By this point in the creative life cycle, sales and customer support teams become the main source of information for consumers, who expect more information about products than ever — and have high expectations for teams to respond to their inquiries.

Legacy systems made it impossible to connect these downstream teams to the upstream parts of the process that are relevant to consumers. Support teams have trouble finding up-to-date materials library information, measurements and other important product data. When sales support reps have to search with Google while on the phone with a customer to find the information they need, mistakes and confusion ensue.

Hyland's Nuxeo Platform puts up-to-date knowledge at your support teams' fingertips. No more relying on disconnected searches that are highly dependent on the skill and expertise of the representative. Now, sales and support can find relevant information from every step of the product asset management cycle easily and quickly.

Using the platform, customer inquiries can be answered directly, with full confidence in the answers given. From the specific materials or ingredients used in a particular batch number to the retailers who stock a particular product near a consumer's zip code, teams can instantly access information across the product creative life cycle.

Connected product information doesn't have to flow upstream to downstream. Let's say an apparel company's fall 2022 collection receives a number of customer complaints about a failed zipper. With Hyland's Nuxeo Platform,



support representatives can log the issue and have it automatically connect to the specific batch and product to find which zipper supplier and product was defective — allowing materials teams to make more customer-friendly choices for next season's products.

Designing the next big hit means responding to consumer preferences fast — but streamlining just one part of product asset management simply doesn't go far enough, and may even make work more difficult for teams at another stage.

In traditional product design and creative processes, content moved downstream from one stage to the next, but the associated context didn't follow it. Companies pay a high price for low visibility, including time-consuming reviews and approvals, searches for information in multiple systems and versioning chaos.

The Hyland Nuxeo Platform has a solution that goes beyond traditional marketing DAM — to connect product information, workflows, approvals and all the product and version context that brings products and their associated assets from ideas to reality.

That's why Hyland's Nuxeo Platform is built from the ground up to adapt to your design and development processes, integrating content and data from across your existing systems and enabling teams to collaborate seamlessly. The platform scales to accommodate an unlimited numbers of assets, from the simple (images, documents, video, product data) to the complex (3D renderings, campaigns, talent records).

Want to create a responsive, agile product design and marketing process that empowers all of your teams to do their best work, fast? It's time to think beyond DAM.

Learn more at [Nuxeo.com](https://www.nuxeo.com)

i. McKinsey, The need for speed: Capturing today's fashion consumer, 2018.