The Life of Content

HOLISTIC THINKING IN A DAM WORLD

Glad You're Here!

- **Who I Am:**
  - Brad Zylman – Creative Technologist
  - Over 15 years of experience in DAM (Administration, Governance and Processes)
  - I've trained multiple people on Asset Management. My titles have included: Digital Librarian, Color Management Expert, Creative Technologist, Process Engineer, Print Production Engineer, Video MAM Admin & More…
- **What I Am Tasked to Do for You:**
  - Explain the 'Life of Content" as a holistic approach to Asset Management to spur thoughts and ideas on your company processes and departments
- **What I Hope You Learn:**
  - How understanding the "Life of Content" can assist Digital Asset Management reach its maximum potential in your workflows.

Holistic: Definition

- **Holistic thinking** is characterized by critical reasoning across systematic parts and involves understanding a system by sensing its large-scale patterns and planning for them. Holistic thinkers believe that events are the products of external forces and situations. They tend to give broad attention to context, relationships and elements in over-arching processes.

- Holistic thinking is often used synonymously with systems thinking. Systems thinking is your ability to understand things as a whole (or holistically), including the many different types of relationships between all the elements in a complex system.

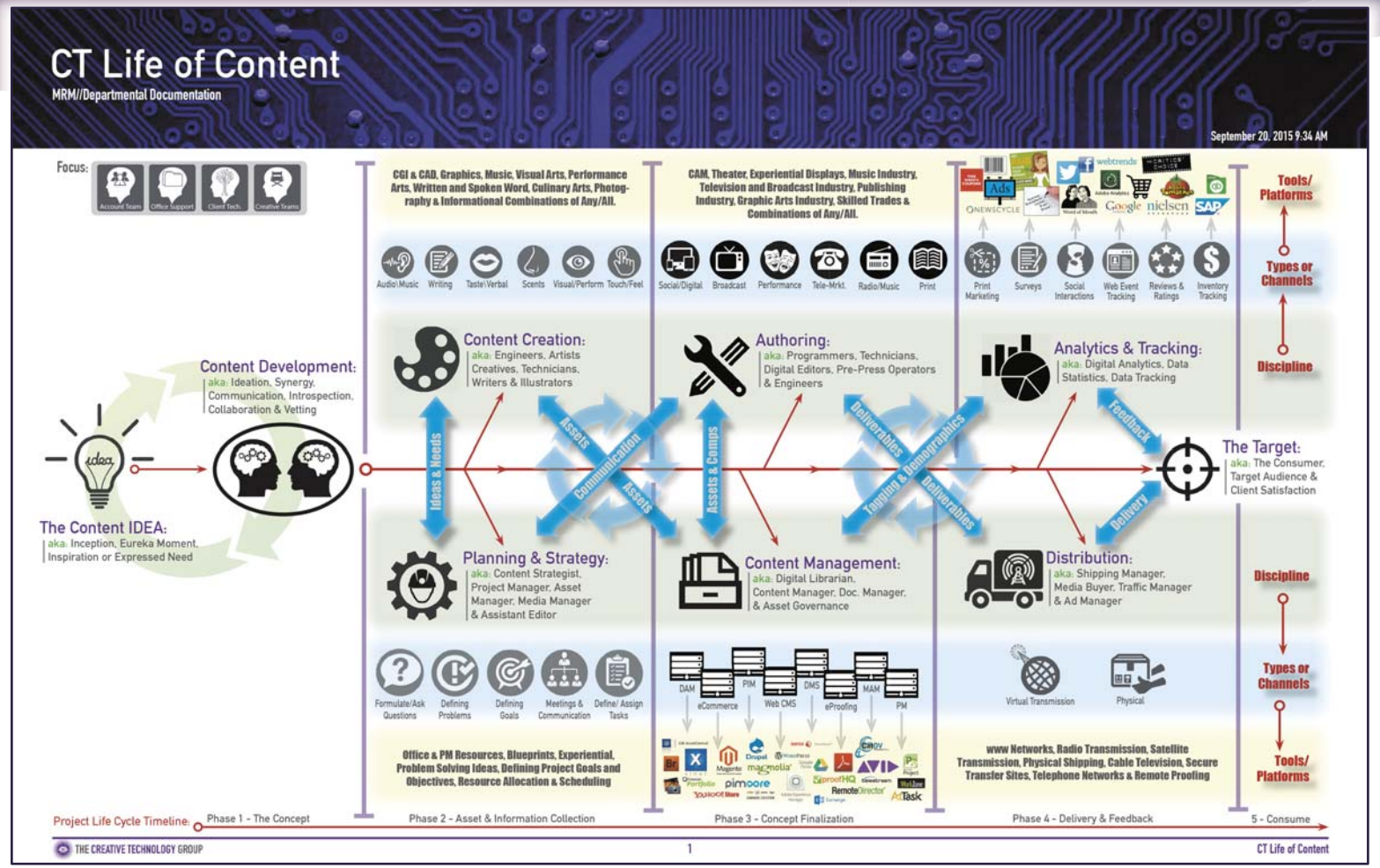
How This Page Sparked the Presentation

- **One Page to Rule Them All**

  I was inspired to create an infographic on how content gets managed from a wide perspective.

  It starts with the idea and moves through the steps to make the idea real and repeatable across its life.

  It's a complicated graphic, so we simplified it.



And that leads us to… the beginning of the "Life of Content"

It Starts with the Idea

- The idea is the starting point for content. It's the inception, the eureka moment or the synthesis of the solution to address the specific request.
- Ideas never start in a void; they are built on other ideas, other experiences. For our purposes, we will think of ideas as the origin of the Life of Content.

The idea is the **seed** and starts us on our journey.

Growth of the Idea

- The idea grows if it gets plenty of nourishment through introspection, communication, vetting and refinement.
- If it has merit, it begins to take on a **life** of its own.

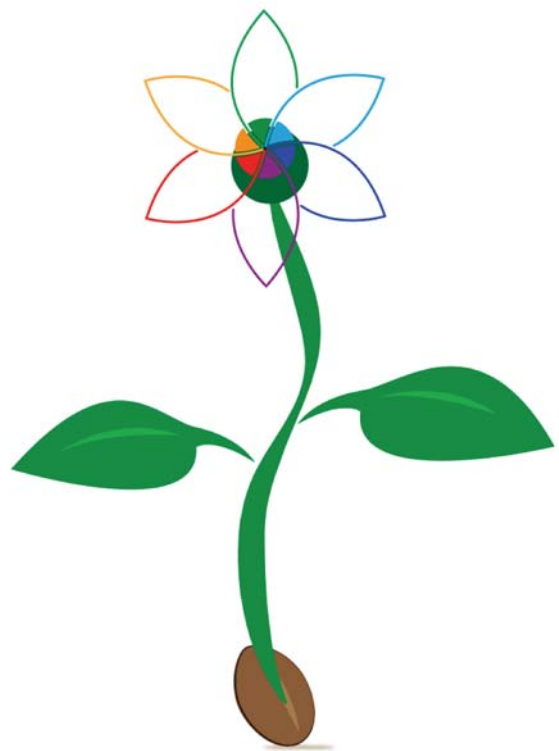
The Spread of Ideas

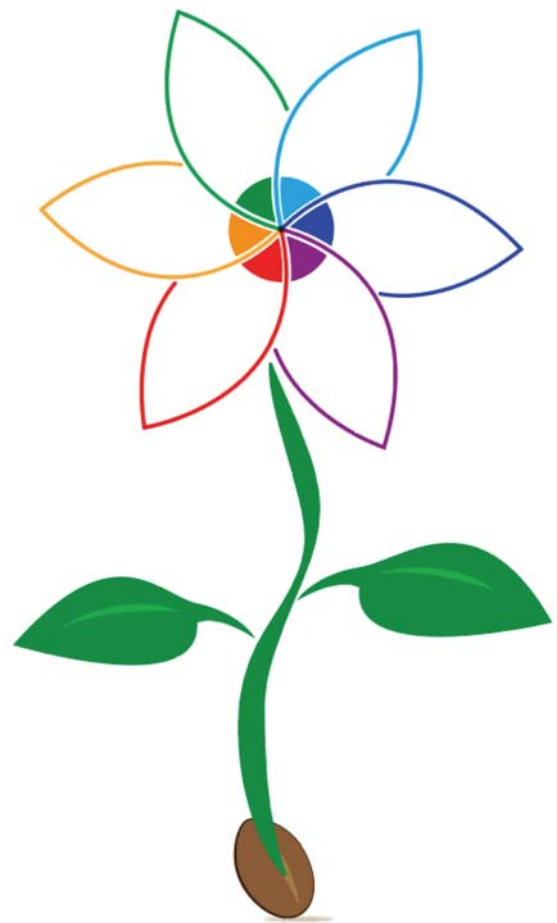
- Some ideas spread like weeds, others flourish under the right conditions. Most have a short life – only as long as the time they are needed.
- Some ideas grow large, some stay small.
- Great ideas can come from anywhere, you just have to nurture them.
- Sometimes that great idea is there at just the right time. This is the idea we are going to build on to understand the **Life of Content**.

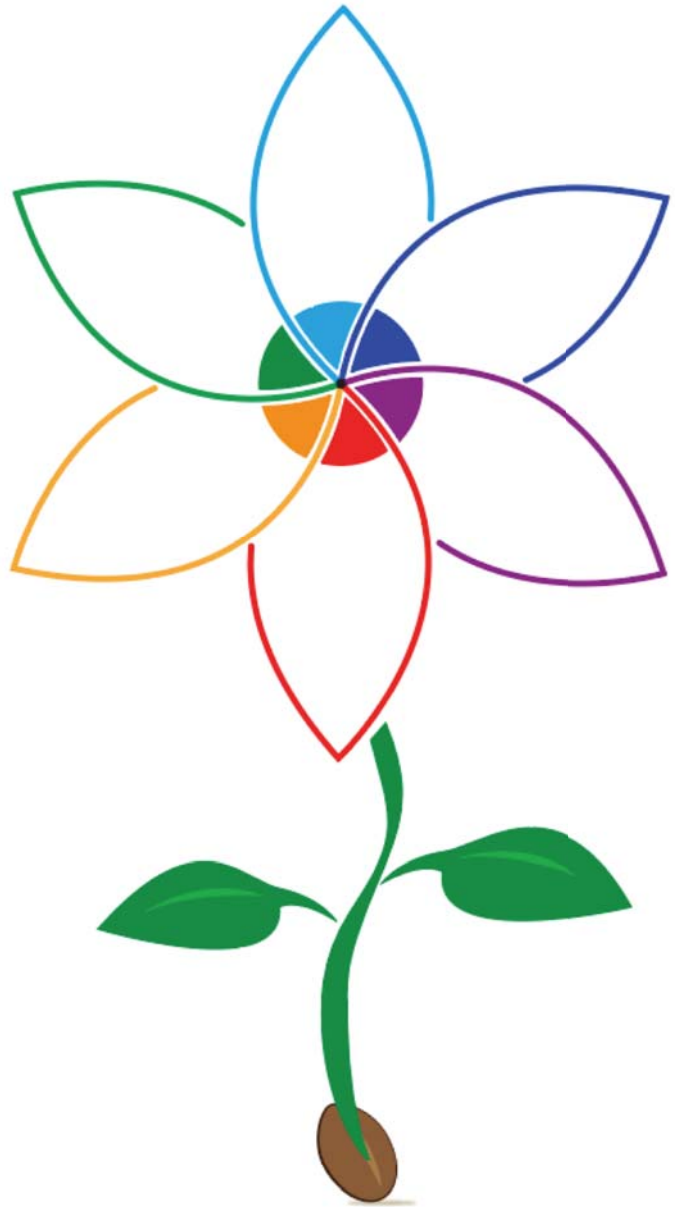
Designed by FreePix

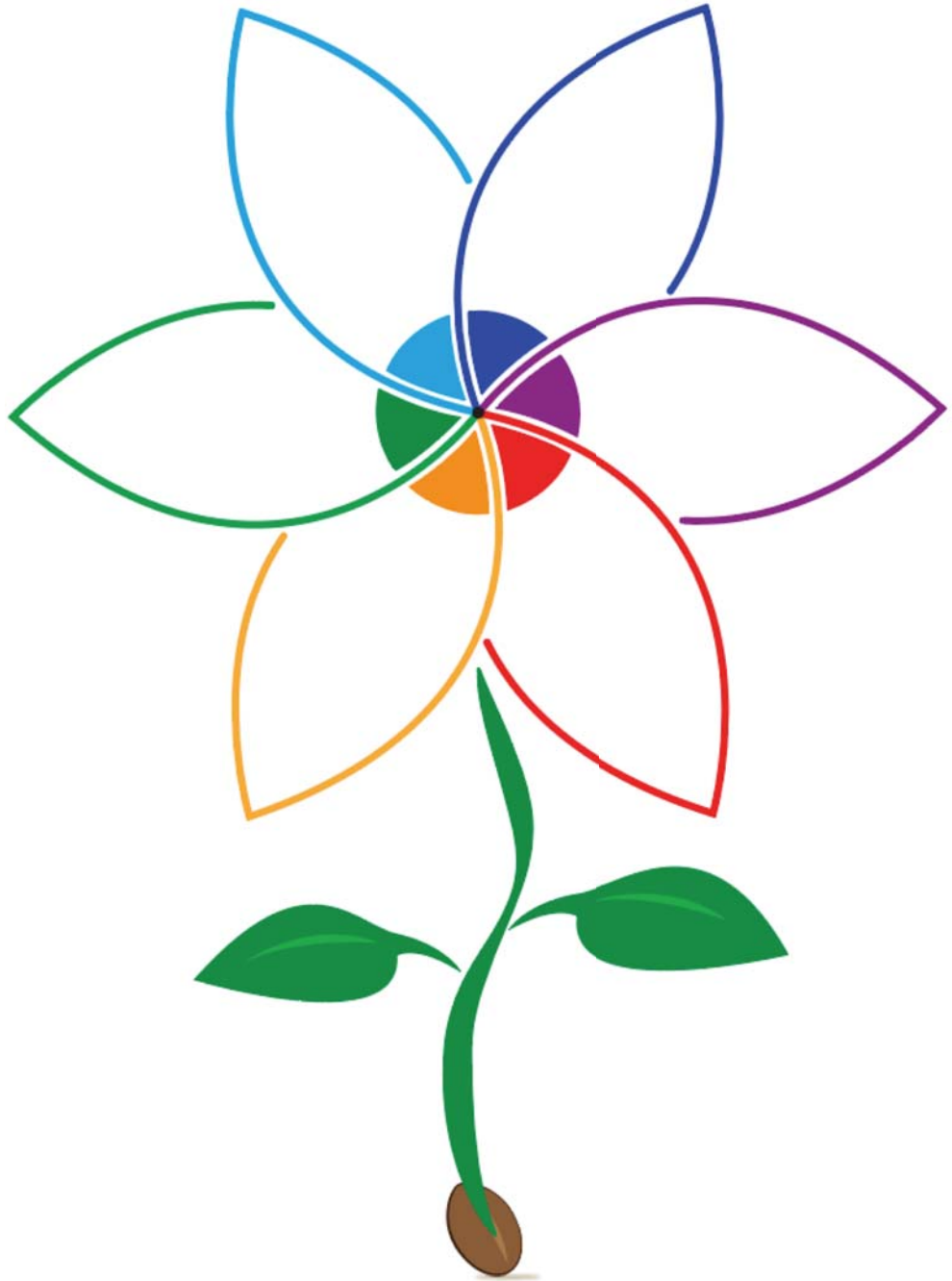
The Life of Content

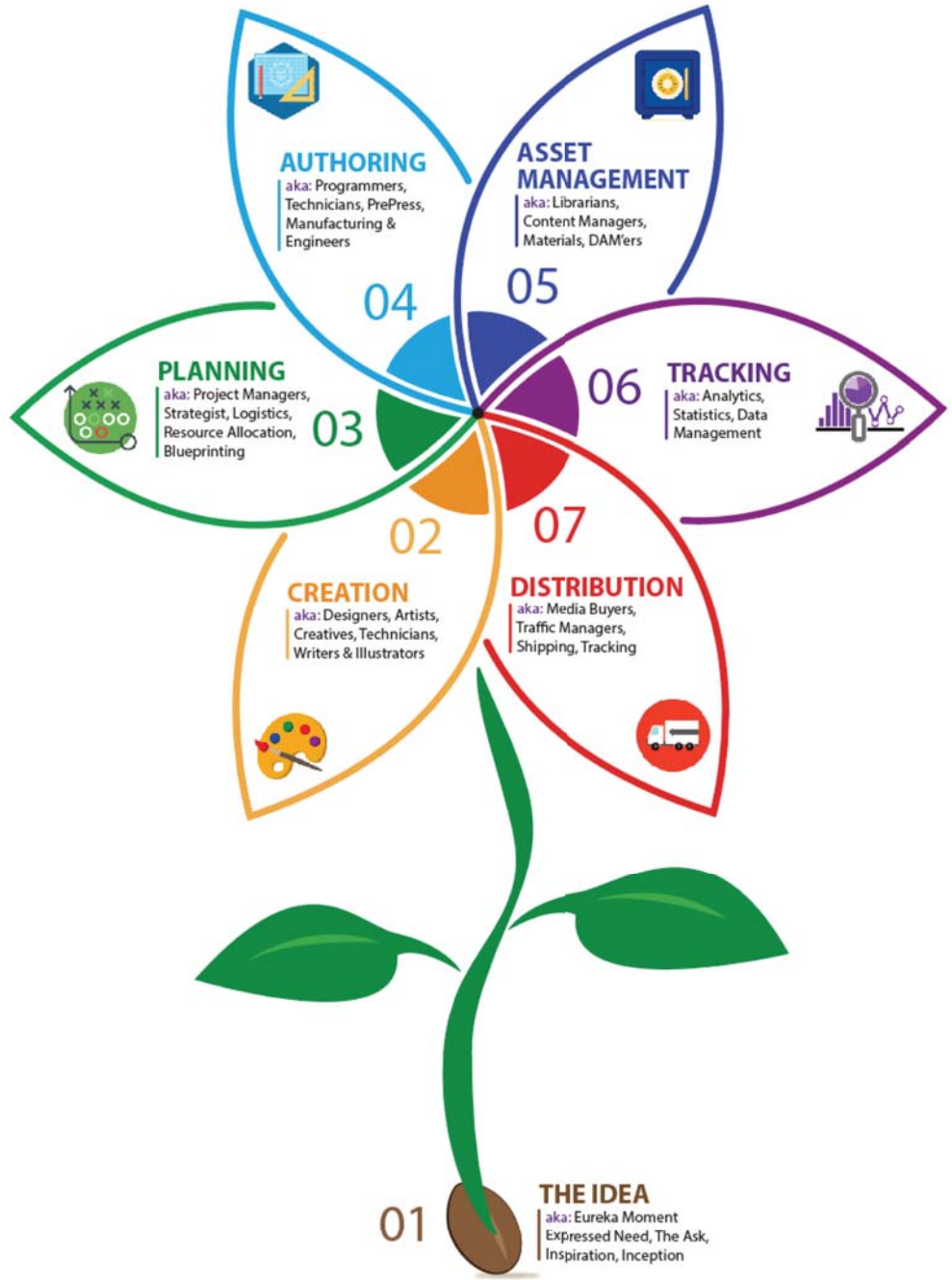
- There are seven main divisions to the **Life of Content** when broken down for the purposes of many businesses:
  - **01. THE IDEA**
  - **02. CREATION**
  - **03. PLANNING**
  - **04. ASSET MANAGEMENT**
  - **05. AUTHORING**
  - **06. TRACKING**
  - **07. DISTRIBUTION**
- Remember that each division does not need to be completely separated from the other divisions, and the more overlap you have between them helps the idea come to fruition faster.
- Better communication between the parts yields a better product.










AUTHORING
aka: Programmers, Technicians, PrePress, Manufacturing & Engineers
04
ASSET MANAGEMENT
aka: Librarians, Content Managers, Materials, DAM'ers
05
PLANNING
aka: Project Managers, Strategist, Logistics, Resource Allocation, Blueprinting
03
06
TRACKING
aka: Analytics, Statistics, Data Management
02
CREATION
aka: Designers, Artists, Creatives, Technicians, Writers & Illustrators
07
DISTRIBUTION
aka: Media Buyers, Traffic Managers, Shipping, Tracking
01
THE IDEA
aka: Eureka Moment Expressed Need, The Ask, Inspiration, Inception

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This leads to better ROI on your investment.

Where does DAM start for you?

- **That moment of initial POW**. Here's that raw idea as it pops into your head.
- Raw and unfinished, but it serves as the inspiration or cornerstone of any content life cycle.
- Is this worth Capturing, Tracking and Cataloging?
- Can tracking employee ideas contribute: to your bottom line, inspire new projects, reduce project timelines, protect your intellectual property, or is it just bloat with little value?

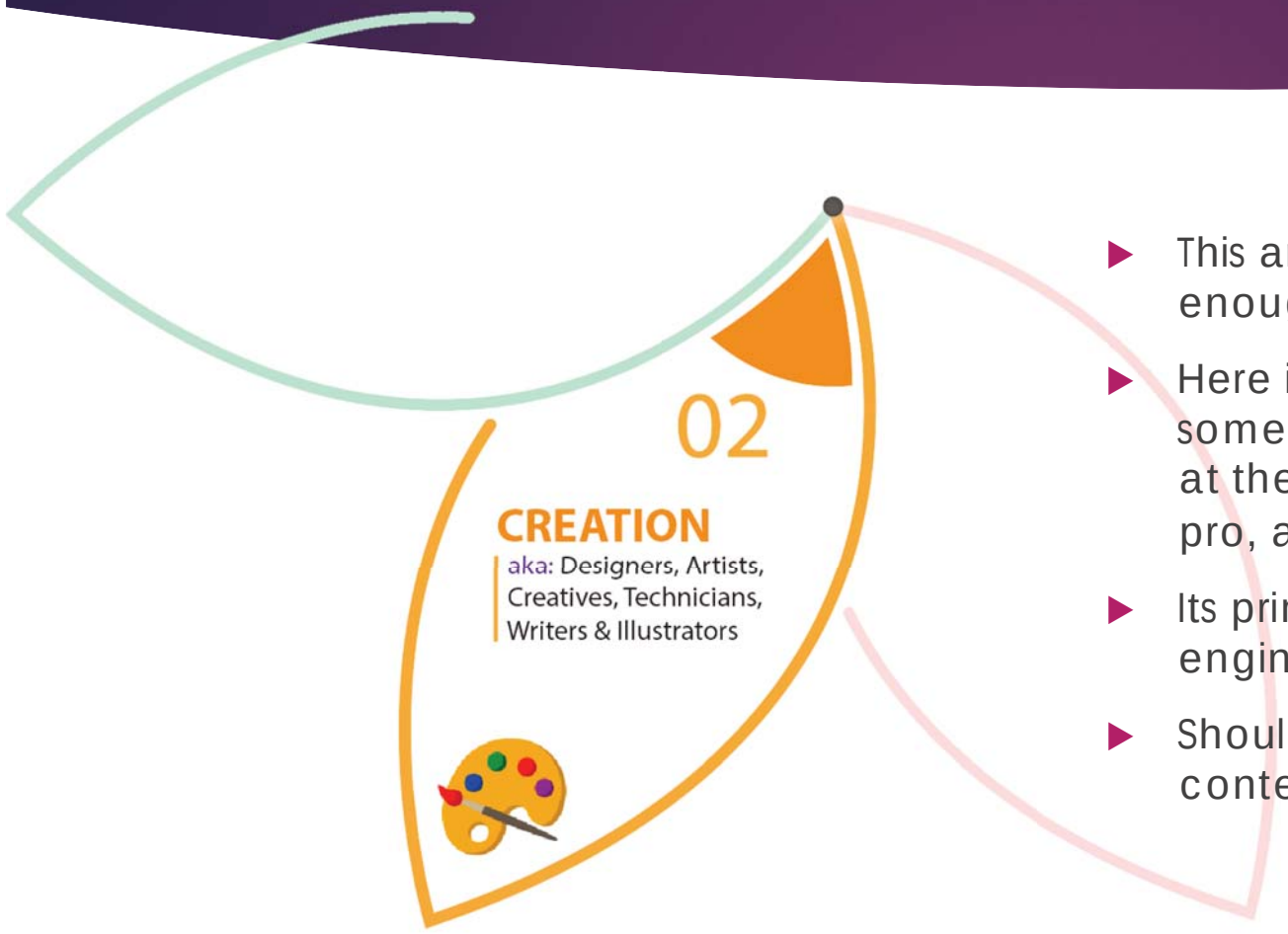
THE IDEA: Reflection Points

- **Can you use your internal asset systems to protect your Intellectual Property?**
  - Many companies make their employees sign non-compete contracts and make it company policy that anything done on the clock or on company equipment belongs to the company. It may be important to keep doodles and discarded ideas for future use or to protect the companies' intellectual property.

- **Can looking through internal assets spur new ideas?**
  - In many cases, just browsing through previous projects and assets developed in other departments, for other circumstances can create new ideas (with permission). DAM offers search and related browsing that many other products cannot match.

- **Creating New Ideas: Some businesses are run on just Ideas…**
  - Ideas on social media best practices, success stories and new platforms that are in development could be valuable ideas to keep in your company's toolkit for future use. The DAM system could provide valuable structure to these thoughts and spur new ideas.

Step 02: **CREATION**



- This area is defined as the step where the idea had enough merit to be developed into a project.
- Here is where the idea becomes fully realized as something to be **developed into a project**, but it is at the pre-project phase. Some call this step a pre-pro, a concept, a comp or the pre-design phase.
- Its primary stakeholders are designers, artists, engineers, technicians and writers.
- Should your business be capturing this phase of the content life cycle?

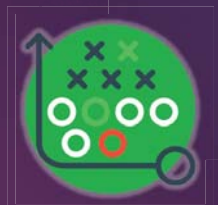
CREATION: Reflection Points

- **Tying Creative Endeavors to DAM Libraries**
  - By removing the obstacles of access to managed content, creative potential can be unleashed. Remove the artificial walls between departments by opening DAM access and welcoming project managers and conceptual thinkers to work together.
- **Integrate the Creative Process to Your Production Needs**
  - By utilizing the DAM libraries as the ”source of truth” for picking up foundational assets, disclaimers, product descriptions and pricing information, the creative cycle can greatly reduce the authoring and distribution cycles. If creative department leaders can see the benefit, it will lead to streamlining of the project as it crosses departments.
- **Capturing the Creative Process**
  - Don’t let DAM become an impediment to the creative culture. Creatives are resistant to adding process or locking them into doing things a certain way. Concentrate on how to help them on their terms and use Digital Asset Management. Let creative types be creative, and concentrate on your DAM helping protect your intellectual property.

Step 03: **PLANNING**

- Large companies have planning departments with staff trained to take on the resources needed to successfully execute an idea. Smaller companies often have people wearing many hats. Some companies have project management systems, or internal people to sort out the milestones in many projects to keep your goals on track and hit your business requirements.
- The stakeholders at this stage are Project Managers, Strategist and Logistics. This is where you start figuring out your resources **(people/time & money)** needed to accomplish the tasks of creating something real.
- Is capturing some or all of the information at this point a good time to integrate your DAM processes into the stream of information gathering?

PLANNING: Reflection Points



- **Project Scheduling:** Would it be beneficial to capture project scheduling information within your DAM?
  - Job/Project/Purchasing numbers associated to assets or routing of sign-off information.

- **Strategy:** Can you use your DAM to increase the efficiencies of Content Strategy?
  - Finding missing content, **reuse of content** or knowing when to update items. Product metadata and using naming conventions can assist pulling related assets together. Generating contact sheets of project materials can be a great way to get organized.

- **Proactive Production**: Some projects repeat annually or every quarter. Can you get out in front of them?
  - Can your DAM be used to pull collections of related projects together for the next project to reduce production times, alert teams of upcoming events or supply contact sheets for the planning teams? Even consider Proxy assets as placeholders before final assets are completed to gather metadata and project information in advance.

Step 04: **AUTHORING**

- Authoring is the stage where the idea has become a project. The idea is moved from a concept to a finished and **repeatable product**. It is converted from thoughts and concepts into its final form that is appropriate for manufacturing and eventual distribution.
- Creative and Engineering designs are turned into the final pieces. A great example is taking web design drawings and turning them into code that works on web browsers, or building the skyscraper that an architect designed.
- Utilize DAM libraries to aid production in finding the foundational assets it needs to create final products.

AUTHORING: Reflection Points

- **Cross-Departmental Workflows:** Leverage your DAM as the source of truth to feed your content management platforms. Content and image assets can be automated by pointing developers to the DAM to pick up assets that have proper rights and restriction information, and written content can be stored as well as graphics and preferred client branding. Finalized Project Content can then be fed back in to keep historical records of work performed.
- **Manufacturing:** By keeping centralized blueprints, contracts and timelines, project errors and ambiguity can be reduced by having only the latest versions available to the end users. Centralizing the revisions and annotations on the problems or last-minute client changes can reduce cycle times between posting revisions.
- **Business Documents:** Preferred messaging and presentations can be stored in original formats or office formats that are easily searched for and organized by event.
- **Production:** Using a centralized database of images, illustrations, logos and templates can greatly aid production with proper tagging to make searching and using content much easier than traditional server workflows. Some DAM products allow production teams to collaborate on the same documents via the web.

AUTHORING: Breaking It Down

- **Foundational Asset:**

  Each individual asset that can stand alone

- **Final Asset:**

  A group of assets that represent a finished project

- **Snippets:**

  A group of assets designed to work together

- **Campaign Assets:**

  A group of projects designed to complete the objective

Step 05: **ASSET MANAGEMENT**

- Asset Management sits in the center of this overall schematic, but it's here mostly because this is where most companies start engaging with it. The more integrated Asset Management is, the quicker you will see the ROI.
- For those of you who are the company Asset Managers, the core responsibility is to be the **source of truth** and an easy resource to find trustworthy content that can be repurposed and reused to reduce the time to complete projects.
- Metadata is the driver to Asset Management that aids your users to massively reduce project times and understand rights, proper usage and I.P. easily.

ASSET MANAGEMENT: Reflection Points

- **Style Sheets/Graphic Standards:**
  - Use your DAM to help adhere to brand guidelines and logo usage. (Along with a logo/graphics library)
- **Organizing Collections:**
  - Intuitive galleries/collections for end users go a long way in adoption and reuse.
  - Properly keyworded content with well-filled-out Metadata is key.
  - Working with other departments (New Business or R&D) to help maximize business opportunity.
- **Organizing Your Archives:**
  - Asset Management has its own life cycle of useful assets for those who need them. Keeping your assets relevant is vitally important to for search results and proper development on projects. Using the tools built in to track usage rights and expiration dates is a critical component for the Asset Management team.
- **Onboarding/Training Materials:**
  - A DAM is a great place to house corporate policies, processes, key contacts and organizational charts.

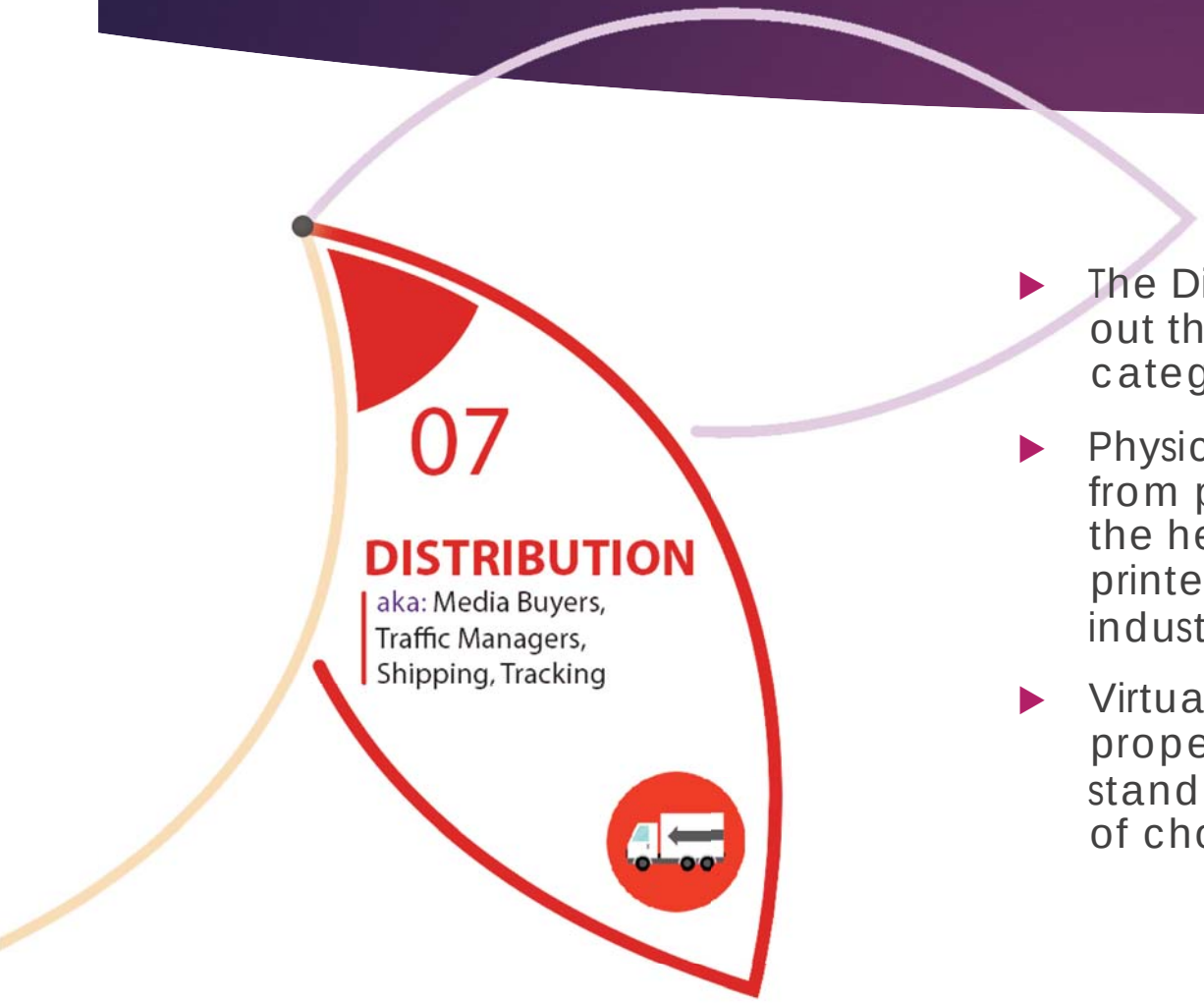
Step 06: **TRACKING**

- Managing hundreds or thousands of pieces of content, it's too easy to repeat our mistakes. It's frustrating to conduct dozens of experiments without ever seeing the results. Analytics speak on behalf of our stakeholders and audience members to guide us toward better content.
- Where are assets being used outside the DAM? Who uses these assets?
- How many times are assets downloaded, viewed, shared and repurposed? How do they perform?
- To be effective, we need intuition and sparks of inspiration – and we need **DAM analytics** to unveil the impact of our creative choices. To sleep more peacefully at night, make use of all the data that is hidden in your DAM system just waiting to be tapped.

TRACKING: Reflection Points

- Utilizing the DAM to track those winning assets can become a powerful tool to tie your clients and users of the DAM to understand why one asset or piece of content should be picked over another. In the digital world, content creators are removed from their audience. Digital marketers have to measure their performance by indirect means. And that is why analytics are so crucial.
- Capture the way users report their intended use when they download or share assets. That data will reveal what your users need, how they put content to work and which brand assets may be overused.
- Leverage the tools in the DAM for counting the number of times an asset is used to build something else. Not only for their popularity, but overuse as well.
- With data on searches, shares, embeds, views, downloads and more, you can see where your content really goes and tracking analytic data creates a positive feedback loop on the performance of campaigns and content across channels.

Step 07: **DISTRIBUTION**



- The Distribution Channel(s) are the final product that goes out the door. Distribution can primarily be divided into two categories right at the beginning: **Physical or Virtual**.
- Physical delivery involves the logistics with moving products from place to place. Trucks, trains, cargo ships or aircraft do the heavy lifting. Drones, autonomous vehicles and 3D printers may eventually replace large sections of this industry.
- Virtual delivery is the movement of electronic data in the proper format to be useful on the other end. Leveraging standards is critical for execution on the end user's platform of choice.

DISTRIBUTION: Reflection Points

- **Ingredients:** Tracking of food distribution information and ingredients and additives has become an essential tool in the safety of consumers. Many companies mandate how ingredients come in, are turned into products and how they are distributed to consumers.
- **Shipping Data:** Leveraging a few metadata fields of destination or emails, along with departure times, GPS location, and arrivals is core to any good business model for this segment. Managing this information can aid end users on your web portals. Make sure not to infringe on privacy information.
- **Video:** Leverage your DAM tools to transcode video for your common formats for web, broadcast or mobile projects. Also, it can be used as a communication tool for your internal teams to pick up stills and spots for future projects.

Adoption Ideas...

- Unless you address the audience in a compelling way, this culture can certainly hinder adoption of any DAMS-based workflow. They have to see the benefit(s) in order to invest in change.
- Please call it something else besides DAM or you'll lose them right away. In a lot of ways, you have to create an advertising campaign yourself to get your message across, just like you're selling a pitch to clients.
- "It's really a grassroots approach with the folks in the trenches that will get the work done. If you concentrate too heavily on top management, it will flounder. Those people performing their tasks to get the assets created can help you sell it to upper management if there is a necessity to do that for budgetary reasons. If you can sell what you're doing to them, you'll have an award-winning campaign." –Russ Stanton BBDO
- **Don't do it all, all at once. Focus on small steps and integrations across your company with champions in each department that will help you integrate and grow the DAM, only for the benefit of all.**

Other Ideas...

- Use the ideas presented here to think about how your DAM may be isolated (siloed in just one department) or, if you're thinking of implementing for the first time, think about what's core to your business and expand later by reaching out to other departments for integration after you've got your processes in place.
- **Audit Time:** Many companies get audited by their clients to show their work they have completed matches billing statements. A well-organized DAM can make this event less stressful.
- **Historical Archives:** The DAM can be a great tool for company events and business anniversaries.
- If you have questions after you leave the event today, you can contact me through my website at: www.bzylman.com

Questions...

and THANK YOU!