Achieving IT Strategic Directives When Evaluating a New Promotional Content Ecosystem

By embracing a collaborative assessment model to evaluate technology platforms, life sciences organizations can better address cross-functional stakeholder needs.

Executive Summary

With the ever-increasing demand for managing rich media digital content, many life sciences companies are finding their existing platforms for promotional material review/approval (MLR), digital asset management (DAM) and Web experience management (WEM) inadequate. Brand teams require accelerated review and approval of creative content to keep pace with ever-changing messages and to repurpose relevant collateral across the enterprise; meanwhile, commercial operations strive to keep costs down by repurposing and reusing digital assets across geographies and lines of business.

In addition to serving changing business needs, there is tremendous pressure to meet newly established IT strategic directives. Examples include platform rationalization to minimize the need for in-house expertise; cloud-based SaaS solutions to minimize IT support costs; integrated platform vendors to achieve a single point of accountability; simplified user training and support services; and greater volume discounts on application licenses. With multiple platforms and solutions available that meet these criteria, choosing the right platform is a strategic imperative, with long-term consequences.

While there may be a best-of-breed solution for each individual component of your organization’s platform requirements (MLR, DAM, WEM, etc.), an ecosystem with disparate components is often suboptimal for achieving strategic imperatives. Even if organizations embrace a best of breed approach, they must ensure that each solution can seamlessly connect with one another via an open API structure that facilitates integration with the existing IT ecosystem. One option would be to define the platform “anchor” that will provide the central pivotal point for the ecosystem and build the other solutions around it.

Rating and Ranking Requirements

Our approach enables life sciences organizations to work more collaboratively to determine what is best to meet the requirements of stakeholders across medical, legal, regulatory and commercial operations disciplines. We’ve created a model to help cross-functional decision-makers rate and
Prioritizing MLR/DAM Initiatives

Figure 1

rank proposed integrated ecosystem criteria and parameters to determine the best approach to address key business and IT requirements (see Figure 1).

We have found that the right solution should balance four strategic platform selection imperatives:

- Business.
- Financial.
- Vendor.
- Technology.

To leverage the model, the first step is for key stakeholders to define and agree upon the

Eyes on the Prize

IT Strategic Focus Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Focus Area</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Productivity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>Platform Process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vendor</td>
<td>Industry Presence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Industry Presence</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Objective</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Parameters</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industry Presence</td>
<td>Customer base</td>
<td>Agency workload</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Life science focus</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Industry reports</td>
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<td>Platform</td>
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<td>Functionality</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Third-party licensed modules</td>
<td>Mobile access</td>
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<tr>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>Pre-built global user workflows</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Open API architecture</td>
<td>U.S. gatekeeper-centric</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single instance</td>
<td>Repackaging/house of assets</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Single/multi tenant</td>
<td>Revenue cycle time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SOA-ready</td>
<td>Single source repository for all assets (in development and approved with all comments)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>Application</td>
<td>Business rules configuration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deployment</td>
<td>Integrated with source files (including interactive assets)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Configuration/customization</td>
<td>Single source repository</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>Business rules repository for all assets</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Migration</td>
<td>(in development and approved with all comments)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service Model</td>
<td>Cloud-based SaaS</td>
<td>Build, run and maintenance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>DE/UA/PRD</td>
<td>Platform validation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Validated environment</td>
<td>Single global instance</td>
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</tbody>
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IT Solution Ratings* for MLR and DAM Ecosystem

Key Takeaways

1. Platform Green and Blue are aligned with company’s strategic objectives with marginal differences.
2. Platform Blue provides incremental core MLR/DAM platform benefits.
3. However, Platform Green aligns with IT ecosystem directives.
4. Do incremental platform benefits outweigh IT directives?

* Rating Scale: 1-5 (Company Priority) x 1-5 (Platform Capability)

Figure 2
evaluation criteria and sub-parameters for each strategic area. Parameters are then rated based on their relative importance to the organization needs and their relevance to an organizationally aligned MLR-DAM ecosystem (see Figure 2).

By rating various solutions using the model’s pre-defined parameters, it becomes easier to accurately identify the optimal solution that best fits organizational needs.

A five-phase optimized approach can be followed to achieve confidence in the output:

- **Phase 1: Engagement planning:**
  - Define stakeholders and preferred communication channels.
  - Identify high-risk areas.
  - Refine roles and responsibilities.
  - Schedule kick-off meeting.

- **Phase 2: Pre-work and initiation of information-gathering:**
  - Sponsor kick-off meeting.
  - Review existing roles/responsibilities.
  - Enable stakeholder communication.
  - Confirm stakeholders and schedule interviews.
  - Review current state documentation.
  - Complete questionnaire for sponsor review.
  - Initiate cloud-based options.

- **Phase 3: Interviews and assessment:**
  - Conduct stakeholder interviews on existing platform gaps.
  - Continue current and cloud-based assessments.
  - Validate current-state docs.
  - Incorporate learnings from prior assessment work.

- **Phase 4: Analysis output and draft delivery:**
  - Complete analysis on all stakeholders and platforms.
  - Provide future-needs working draft summary, inclusive of cloud-based recommendations.
  - Schedule feedback session with sponsor.

- **Phase 5: Business case and final presentation:**
  - Refine final deliverable based upon sponsor feedback.

In conjunction with sponsor, conduct meeting on internal findings.

Since every organization is unique, there may not be one perfect model output; however, the model does provide qualified directional guidance by ranking the various parameters through the collective lens of stakeholder requirements. Essentially, the model output is a customized directional viewpoint for any organization.

This entire process has the added benefit of uncovering significant discrepancies regarding important parameters across various functional areas. In our experience, some departments feel it is urgent to reduce costs, while others do not believe change is needed to avoid business disruptions; meanwhile, smaller functional areas simply want to be able to leverage existing content.

In our view, the IT department is or should be at the forefront of these changes. IT’s challenge is to demonstrate value to the business. Partnering early in the discussions and evaluation process will bring clarity to the proposed benefits and improve cross-functional collaboration, which is critical for obtaining buy-in for a successful transition.

Finally, the benefit of leveraging a scorecard is that all voices can be heard and robust discussions can be had across functions, revealing outputs clearly visible to all. By debating the valuation of various criteria parameters in an open forum, all interests can be weighed, challenged and agreed upon within a model. The focus then becomes how the model’s output best serves organizational needs – beyond individual functional interests.

**Looking Ahead: Next Steps**

Change is a constant theme within the life sciences industry, and the IT function is the primary catalyst for much of this change. Successful transitions start with a partnership among all key internal stakeholders, enabling them to engage and be part of the solution. By embracing a collaborative assessment model to evaluate technology platforms, life sciences organizations can better address cross-functional stakeholder needs.

The major steps are as follows:

- Create a governance advisory committee comprised of functional leads to provide the necessary guidance and accountability for their respective representatives on a promotional ecosystem technology assessment (PETTA) team.
• Have co-owners (IT and business) of the PETA team create a charter that clearly establishes scope, goals and deliverables.

• Engage the PETA team across functional representatives with the primary goal of defining and/or refining the criteria and parameters of the key areas of strategic focus in the technology assessment model.

• Once the model is complete, assess the preliminary output, based on your strategic partners’ insights and inputs.

• Schedule live demonstrations of select platform providers to ensure that any strengths/gaps in the model are clarified.

• Regroup internally to refine the parameters and/or ratings of the platforms being evaluated.

• Review final findings with the PETA team to ensure alignment.

• Review final directional output with the governance team.

With the right approach and strategic partner, IT can collaborate with business stakeholders to shape the future-state technology roadmap for building an optimized promotional content ecosystem.

About the Author
Andrew Isaacs is a Principal in Cognizant’s Analytics Life Sciences Business Unit. He has over 25 years of life sciences experience, focusing on leading global commercial operations and technology optimization teams, marketing excellence, brand management teams, lifecycle planning, stakeholder management and governance/change management. Andrew was the commercial processes and practices lead for a global pharmaceuticals company and chief strategy officer for a life sciences medical communications agency. He also introduced “marketing excellence” at a global life sciences company and launched multiple products and services and oversight for global new product development. He has an undergraduate degree in biomedical engineering, an M.B.A./M.S. graduate degree and post-graduate certificates in project management and new product development. He recently authored the point of view “Accelerating Bio-Pharma’s Marketing Transformation.” Andrew can be reached at Andrew.Isaacs@cognizant.com.

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