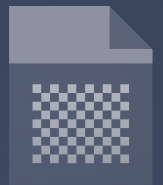
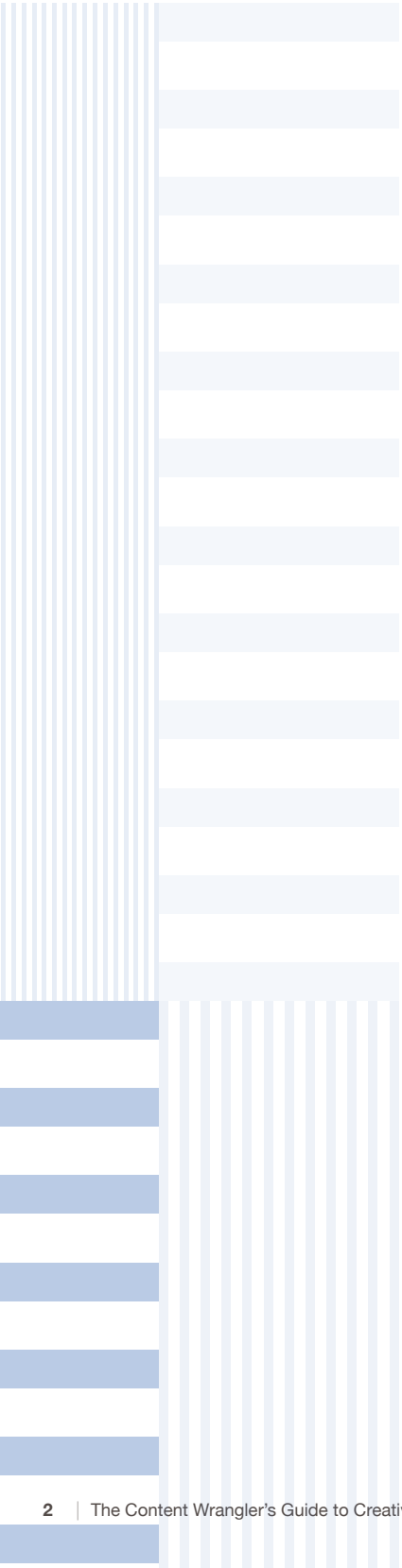


# The Content Wrangler's Guide to Creative Harmony

Elevate your brand with better file organization, sharing, and analytics





There is no denying the potential power of a single piece of creative content. After all, an image is more than just a creative file. It is many things — storyteller, emotional connector, teacher, or even motivator. It has the capacity to tell your brand’s unique story. It can move your audience to tears or drive a complicated point home. Because of this, your entire organization, in one way or another, relies on your creative assets — the videos, images, audio files, and documents — that personify your brand.

But mayhem can quickly unfold. Your creative library and team are growing larger by the day. More collaborators, departments, and partners need access to files. Your design team is under water. And, that “black hole” that used to be your shared drive is testing every ounce of patience you have left. Even Sherlock Holmes can’t find what he needs in there!

You are sick and tired of the daily strains and struggles. We get it. But, we also know that you’re not alone. Many brands may look like they have it together but are hard-pressed to make it all happen. To them, and you, we say, “There is another way!”

**In this guide,** we’ll arm you with the information, exercises, and inspiration to help you and your organization get more out of your creative and marketing files. We’ll introduce you to digital asset management (DAM) and the systems that can make the whole DAM thing work. But more to come on that...

Ready? Let’s go!

# A few DAM words

Before we get in too deep, let's take a moment and talk about DAM.

DAM is the process of administering, organizing, and distributing digital assets — like videos, images, creative files, and documents — from a central location. You're probably doing this in some capacity already. Perhaps you're using a file sharing platform like Google Drive or Dropbox. Or, you organize and store files on your company server and email them out as needed. Whatever the case, you likely have a process (no matter how broken) to manage the ins and outs of your creative and marketing assets.

There are a lot of software apps and tools out there that can help you with DAM, most of which only address certain stages of the process. DAM software, on the other hand, is the whole kit and kaboodle. A DAM system, or software solution, is a platform used to centralize, store, and share digital assets, automate manual tasks across the asset lifecycle, and streamline marketing and creative workflows.

This is where Widen comes in. Our DAM system, the Widen Collective<sup>®</sup>, is made up of a suite of apps that work together to give teams more efficiencies and fewer headaches. The Collective is an integrated, web-based platform that powers brands from anywhere, enabling entire organizations to create compelling, meaningful, and measurable experiences with their valuable digital assets.

## Are we on the same page?

Depending on your role, you may define certain terms differently than your neighbor. Whether you're on the marketing, product, creative, or tech team, let's make sure we're all aligned on a few definitions that we'll use throughout this guide.

**Content:** Compelling information that informs, engages, or amuses.<sup>1</sup>

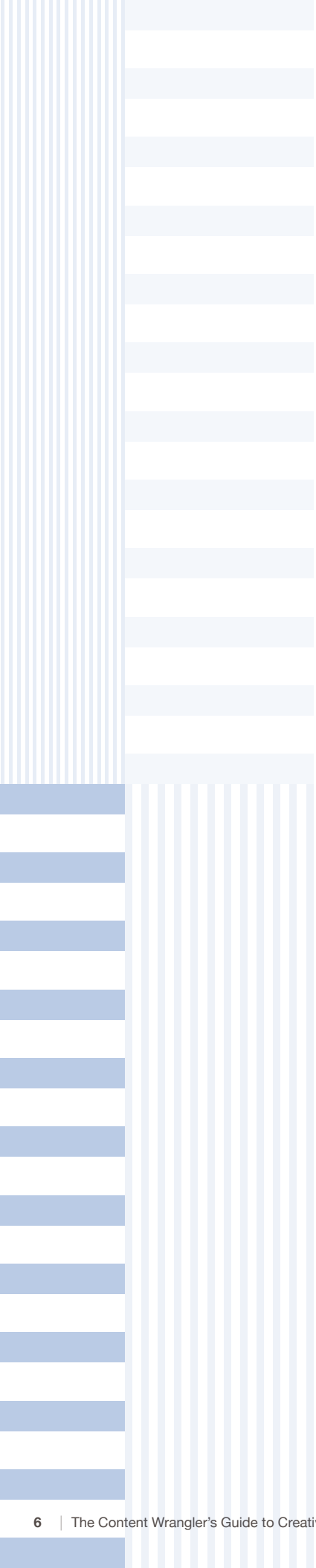
**Content marketing:** A strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience, and ultimately to drive profitable customer action.<sup>2</sup>

**Content wrangler:** Any individual within an organization tasked with organizing, finding, distributing, and managing content and digital assets.

**Digital assets:** Useful or valuable digital files that come with the right to use. Examples include audio files, documents like PowerPoint and Excel, videos, stock images, photos, design files, PDFs, and more. The terms "creative assets," "brand assets," "marketing assets," and "assets" are used synonymously throughout this guide.



# Ten Core Characteristics of a DAM System



To be certified as a true DAM system, vendors must apply for evaluation by the DAM Foundation and meet their ten requirements. While the Foundation's qualifications are extensive, at the most basic level, they detail the treatment of assets across these ten categories:

- 1 Ingestion and manipulation
- 2 Security
- 3 Storage
- 4 Rendering and transformation
- 5 Enrichment
- 6 Relationship tracking
- 7 Workflow process
- 8 Search and find
- 9 Preview
- 10 Produce and publish

Visit <http://dammataturitymodel.org/10-core-characteristics/> for a list of certified vendors and a detailed description of the ten core characteristics of a DAM system.

# Situation analysis: exercises

You may be frustrated with managing your creative and marketing files. Between deadlines, scattered assets, copyrights, decentralized teams, endless redundancies, and content misuse, there's a lot that can go wrong. But, before you revamp your existing processes or bring on another tool to help you get organized, you need a game plan. To do this, explore your current methods. What's working and not working? What are the biggest content management pain points for you, other departments, and outside partners?



## Involve the entire “people stack”

Think of every human touchpoint that interacts with your creative assets and content. Which departments, partners, and roles do your DAM processes impact? Then, conduct surveys, focus groups, or interviews to gather valuable feedback that will help you assess your current DAM situation.



IT



Marketing  
and design



Digital



Upper  
management



Power users



The content wrangler



The decision maker

Typically, we find that organizations fall into one of four DAM identities — Anything Goes, Could Be Worse, Getting There, or Well-Oiled Machine. Find out your organization’s DAM identity by taking our creative harmony assessment. For each of the six assessment categories, add a checkmark under the DAM identity description that most closely aligns with your organization. Then, total up the number of checkmarks for each column to determine your company’s DAM identity.

Assessment Categories	Anything Goes	Could be Worse	Getting There	Well-Oiled Machine
Findability	<input type="radio"/> Nobody can find files buried across email, desktops, and messy drives, so they make do or ask a designer to recreate them.	<input type="radio"/> A handful of people know where to find files, making these select few (much to their dismay) the official “finders of stuff.”	<input type="radio"/> On-site and remote workers can access files on-demand. For the most part, assets are easy to find, but there’s room for improvement.	<input type="radio"/> On-demand, 24/7 access is a given. Consistent and easy-to-navigate organization and search-and-find capabilities make locating assets a breeze (even for new hires)!
Usage	<input type="radio"/> Teams rarely use assets because they either don’t know they exist or where to find them.	<input type="radio"/> Teams use the same go-to assets because waiting for potentially better options takes too long.	<input type="radio"/> If they find it, they use it. There might be a better asset, but who knows.	<input type="radio"/> Optimal assets are leveraged quickly and frequently by partners and dispersed teams.
Brand protection	<input type="radio"/> Inconsistent usage of branded materials, but only a few people seem to care. Brand, copyright, and usage violations run rampant.	<input type="radio"/> Use off-brand and inconsistent assets, despite constant policing. Communicate special instructions for assets, but violations still occur.	<input type="radio"/> Generally use assets properly. However, designers don’t have time to resize images or convert file formats, so people use incorrectly sized images that appear fuzzy or slow down presentations.	<input type="radio"/> System safeguards ensure only approved, compliant, and appropriate assets are available and used by people based on their roles.
Asset security	<input type="radio"/> Many files are corrupt and overloaded servers frequently crash.	<input type="radio"/> Some files are corrupt. Storage solution has yet to crash, but if it did, assets would be lost forever.	<input type="radio"/> Even if systems went down, someone could recover the files. Have some control over who can access certain assets, but only at the folder or asset level.	<input type="radio"/> Watermarking and advanced permissions ensure that only the right people use only the right assets. Have added insurance from data encryption, vulnerability monitoring, backups, and reliable archiving.
System communications	<input type="radio"/> Disparate systems and channels rely on the same content, yet all publishing and creative refreshes are manual. Redundancies waste a lot of time.	<input type="radio"/> Systems don’t communicate with each other, which creates extra work. Outside of needing to remove or update old assets manually from marketing channels, the process isn’t unbearable.	<input type="radio"/> Assuming people can find what they need, assets pull from a central, connected location for pain-free publishing.	<input type="radio"/> Assets pull from one, web-based location for pain-free publishing. Assets embedded on websites or shared via a URL link also automatically update based master files.
Data	<input type="radio"/> No clue which assets perform the best or worst.	<input type="radio"/> Rely solely on anecdotal feedback to understand asset performance and potential.	<input type="radio"/> Gather anecdotal and quantitative data, but don’t always apply it.	<input type="radio"/> Identify and track top performing assets so people can repurpose, retire, update, or emulate content based on hard data.
<b>DAM identity totals</b> Tally the checkmarks				

**Your organization’s Dam identity:**

Anything Goes

Could be Worse

Getting There

Well-Oiled Machine

## How’d you stack up?

If you scored Well-Oiled Machine status, congratulations! There’s likely some fine tuning required here and there, but your creative and content operations are chugging along like a well-oiled machine. We applaud you!

More likely, you have a little work to do. It’s okay most brands do. Just know, regardless of your DAM identity, the efforts you take to improve file organization, sharing, and analytics will have a tremendous return on investment (ROI).

**Here’s a little back-of-napkin exercise to try. Go to:**

<http://digitalassetmanagement.com/roi-calculator/>



# DAM goals

Now that you have an understanding of where your current creative and content operations stand, it's time for the forward-thinking part. Taking into account cross-organization and partner feedback, jot down your top four DAM goals. How do you want to transform the way your organization manages its digital assets over the next six months to a year?

“No more jumping into the dumpster to find something useable!”

**Jennifer Tyner**  
Digital Asset Manager at  
Progressive Corporation

## Your business's DAM goals

1

2

3

4

Your goals should be unique to your business, brand, and culture. However, it's not unusual for organizations to have the same struggles, resulting in similar DAM aspirations. Here's a look at four typical DAM goals we hear from brands around the world, and how the right DAM system can help make those dreams a reality!

### Goal #1: Ensure valuable assets are found and used.

Purchasing stock images, hiring a videographer, or allocating design time to create promotional flyers takes time and money. And, when these creative outputs go unused, your company's investment is wasted. To ensure that people use your valuable assets, you need to make sure they can find what they need quickly and easily.

#### Solutions

##### Store your assets in one central and searchable place

Wouldn't it be nice never to hear the question, "Do you know where I can find X, Y, or Z" again? A DAM system provides teams, no matter where they are located, with self-service, 24/7 access to a single, organized home for your assets. So, rather than digging through messy folder structures, or worse yet, asking a designer to recreate assets that already exist, teams can locate what they need using the system's advanced search capabilities. Tagging your assets with keywords, descriptions, and other search-friendly information makes finding them simple. Search by keyword, filter, or category. And, take advantage of Google-like predictive search or pick from a list of featured assets!

##### Eliminate workflow bottlenecks

Sometimes people find the assets they need, but the file size or format isn't right. The result? Some move on without the asset, deciding it's not worth the hassle. Others use the wrong size or format, resulting in distorted images, slow websites, and crashed presentations. Or, many people ask a designer to convert the file for them, taking that designer away from other important projects. A DAM system can automate file conversions once and for all. For example, when a designer finishes a project, they upload their master file directly from Adobe Illustrator or InDesign to the DAM system. From here, DAM users don't have to use the design file; they can download the appropriate file size and format they need.

#### Success Spotlight



#### Easy to find photos means time-savings and better media coverage

Before implementing their DAM system, the Collective, the visitor bureau stored their photos on hard drives, making it time consuming to pull photos and images for internal team members or journalists. The Collective's search-and-find capabilities, paired with the ability to provide journalists with self-service guest logins, add up to big time savings.

Average time spent on marketing activities after DAM system:

Search and share

**30 minutes**

Cut by 50%

Emailing journalists

**5 minutes**

Using guest login

## Goal #2:

### Power teams and technologies from a single source of truth

It's not uncommon for multiple departments and partners, as well as the systems they use, to rely on the same content. Distributing, redistributing, uploading, and downloading assets between individuals, content management systems, marketing automation tools, and more takes a lot of time. It's also prone to error, especially if the original file has changed along the way. You need a single source of truth to efficiently and accurately extend the use and value of your creative files.

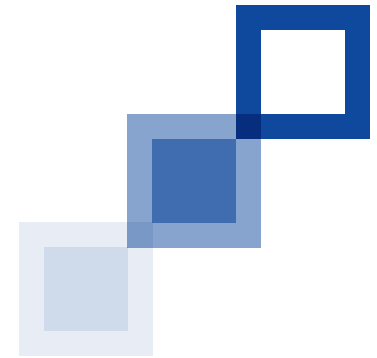
### Solutions

#### Manage content operations more holistically by connecting everyday tools

There's no denying that the right combination of technologies can make your marketing and creative operations easier. But, if they do not work together, you may end up doing a lot of extra work that's redundant and inefficient. If you can connect, or integrate, your disparate systems with your DAM system, you can pull the latest assets directly from the DAM system into other systems. Working on an email marketing campaign or uploading visual content to your website? No problem. You have instant, easy access to the files you need! And, no more questioning if you have the "right" version or approved asset. You only have access to the latest and greatest.

#### Extend your assets further with share links and embed codes

A DAM system helps you reliably extend the reach of your assets. Using share links, you can share assets with anyone via a URL. Embed codes take this one step further, allowing you to quickly display assets on web-based channels like websites and in emails. But, what happens when an asset is revised? Without a DAM system, your web designers or other teams — who could be spending time on more strategic projects — have to swap in the new creative files manually. But with a DAM system, assets shared via an embed code or share link update automatically based on the master file stored in the DAM system.



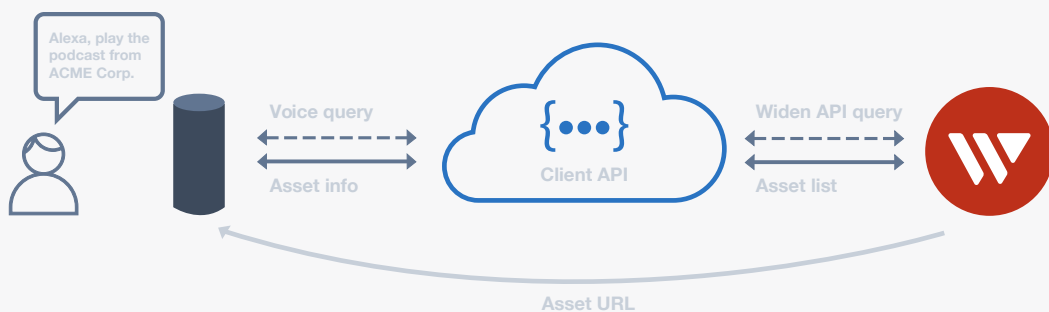
## COPE: Create Once, Publish Everywhere

COPE is a core benefit of using a DAM system. Designers can create an asset and upload it to the DAM system, where it serves as the master file, or single source of truth for that asset. When the asset is shared via URL links or embedded across multiple systems, channels, and websites, any updates made to the master file will automatically update everywhere. No busy work!

## Delivering podcasts to Amazon Alexa from the Collective

Audiences have more choices than ever when it comes to where, when, and how they consume content. It's up to businesses to tackle the challenges of being there. Using the Widen API integration, organizations have the opportunity to connect their powerful digital assets with even the most cutting-edge technologies.

One faith-based media organization wanted to reach a younger audience via voice assistants, like Amazon Alexa. Taking advantage of our API integration, they were able to pull daily audio content in the form of a daily podcast and a flash briefing from the Collective. So, when the listener says, "Alexa, play my flash briefing." she does just that!



## Goal #3:

### Safeguard your assets, business, and brand identity

It is important for your potential and existing customers to feel good about your brand. If the images, videos, and other assets used in presentations and across your website are outdated and inconsistent, you are not exactly painting a picture of trust, authority, and excellence. And, what happens if your server crashes? Are you confident that the assets you invested in are protected? Without safeguards in place, risky asset management can jeopardize the business and brand you worked hard to build.

## Solutions

### Store assets in a secure and scalable location

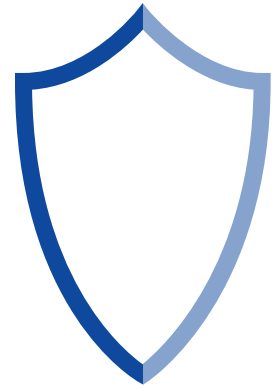
You need to feel confident that your valuable assets won't be lost, stolen, or corrupted. The right DAM system can give you peace of mind. Data encryption, security testing, monitoring, and backups ensure that your global teams can access the assets they need, anytime and anywhere. Furthermore, you need a solution that can grow with you. If you're just starting out and have less than 100 assets and a handful of collaborators, an organized file sharing tool or folder system may suffice. But, as you grow, a cloud-based DAM system that runs on a large, virtual server and storage network (we recommend and use Amazon Web Services) ensures that you always have the bandwidth and storage space to support your teams.

### Control who uses your assets - when, where, and how

Is it difficult to ensure that all of your marketing, sales, creative, and partner teams use your brand assets correctly? Do you see expired images, old videos, or, worse yet, unauthorized assets in presentations and across the web? A DAM system helps you control assets across their entire lifecycle. Every user has a secure login that authenticates them and determines which preset levels of access they have to certain assets and how they can interact with them. Use cases are endless, but these are the security measures that ensure that teams can only access promotions created for them or sensitive product launch materials aren't released prematurely.

### Give your assets a little extra explanation

Digital assets aren't always straightforward. There are often special instructions, legal requirements, and restricted use cases that you need to manage. A DAM system allows you to tag assets with pertinent information, such as usage rights, expiration dates, and project details. You can also attach other files, such as a model release form, so your teams have everything they need in one place. Use built-in version control to make sure everyone instantly knows which asset is "right." Or, automatically release or expire assets based on system controls — no questions asked.



## Success spotlight



### DAM to the rescue!

"Right before our national sales meeting, our entire server went down. The entire company was shut down," Sheryl Connor, creative director at Exactech says. All was inaccessible, except for the Collective. Thankfully, the leadership team was able to go into the DAM system and access the presentations they needed for the event. "It saved our national sales meeting."

## Goal #4:

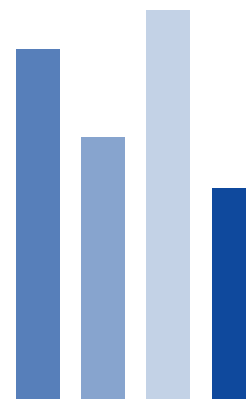
### Use meaningful asset analytics to propel business forward

You can measure just about anything these days. Yet, 66% of B2B marketers do not measure the ROI of their content marketing efforts.<sup>3</sup> Reasons vary, but most organizations need an easier, faster way to measure which creative assets work and don't work in their communications. Rather than combating the problem with more and more content, the answer is smarter content.

#### Solutions

##### Understand your best-performing assets so you make smarter business decisions

From searches, shares, embeds, views, downloads, and more, you can customize DAM system dashboards to interpret the asset data that moves your business forward. So, rather than relying on anecdotal feedback from sales, you can push your strongest brand assets based on actual data. You can allocate marketing budgets and put creative hours into visual content that gets the most engagement. You can see which materials your different regional teams search for or why they downloaded or shared them. And, you can repurpose, retire, update, or emulate content strategies and assets based on what's popular or has performed the best in the past.



“Using the Collective’s analytics app we see that 96% of our approximately 8,800 assets are being used. That tells me we’re providing the right content for our users. Before it was just a hunch.”

#### Tommy Upson

DAM administrator at VF Imagewear

#### Success spotlight



### Using data to give sales teams the right tools

Carnival Cruise Line launched a new brand called Carnival Journeys.

The marketing team created an explainer video to educate internal teams about Journeys, but based on negative anecdotal feedback, they planned to discontinue the video — that was until they looked at the data in the Collective!

1000+ video views

#1 outperformed traditional video content

+30% increase in daily shares and views



intended use data showed that sales used the video in presentations

The result? Carnival could make future marketing decisions based on hard data. They learned:

Facts about highest-performing video assets

Awareness of interest by role and top users

Proof of where asset teams use assets online

Confirmation that they are creating the right content

Guidance for future planning and creation

## What next?

Now that you understand where your organization's DAM identity stands, and your DAM goals, it's time to take action.

How do you think a DAM system could help you achieve your goals? Keep in mind that a DAM system isn't a one-size-fits-all solution. It's important to evaluate your options and take potential solutions for a test drive.

Want to check out our DAM system, the Widen Collective?  
Visit [www.widen.com/free-trial](https://www.widen.com/free-trial) to sign up your free trial today!

## Widen Collective®

Integrated apps that manage  
the complete content lifecycle



### **Assets**

Catalog, control, and deliver rich media assets from a central source.



### **Insights**

Track and measure assets and build site performance dashboards.



### **Portals**

Curate collections and create personalized brand experiences.



### **Templates**

Create localized web-to-print collateral that's on-brand on demand.



### **Workflow**

Manage work in process and streamline collaboration, review, and approval.



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## About Widen

Widen builds high-performing software that empowers organizations to create compelling, meaningful, and measurable digital experiences. Focused on service and fueled by a global community of users, Widen has the highest customer loyalty in the digital asset management (DAM) industry. Its platform spans across brand management, content lifecycle management, and creative management, serving 425,000+ people at over 600 influential brands around the world. Customers include LG, Energizer, Trek, Zeiss, Cornell University, the Atlanta Falcons, Red Gold Tomatoes, Carnival Cruise Line, Yankee Candle, FINCA, and many more.

With more than 70 years of service experience, Widen is the company that does what it says, striving to be the best part of its customers' day, every day. To learn more about Widen, visit [www.widen.com](http://www.widen.com).

