Integrating creative development and marketing operations for the win

How Adobe and Workfront teamed up to help Under Armour integrate metadata from asset production to project management to deliver more dynamic campaigns and achieve greater content velocity.
Since its founding in 1996, Under Armour has grown into a dominant, visually stunning global apparel brand. Creative assets — including videos, store displays, and high-impact photography of the products worn by celebrity endorsers — play a pivotal role in driving this brand and stoking customers’ appetite for more.

In producing these assets, Adobe Creative Cloud — with its ability to share design elements via Adobe Creative Cloud Libraries — and Adobe Experience Manager have been the Under Armour product development and marketing teams’ toolkit of choice for producing and delivering personalized creative to customers.

In 2017, Under Armour also added enterprise work management platform Workfront — an Adobe Exchange Program partner — to improve their ability to organize and execute the work of producing assets. This addition brought much-needed improvements in efficiency and effectiveness.

“Our prior system consisted of manila folders on people’s desks and lots of disorganization,” says Ben Snyder, Under Armour’s IT Product Owner. “It was very apparent from the beginning that Workfront was going to be a great tool for us. Getting our creative brief implemented was really easy, with all its custom fields and the data that our project managers needed.”

However, at that time, Adobe Creative Cloud and Adobe Experience Manager were largely disconnected from the Workfront platform and many inefficiencies persisted. Under Armour had succeeded at gathering their assets from so many disparate asset storage systems into their DAM, Adobe Experience Manager Assets. Now, though, the company could not connect asset data to the creative work being done or the campaigns associated. As long as this persisted, Under Armour would not be able to compare the resources expended on assets to their performance, or address efficiency in a scalable way.

“Our Under Armour has over 300,000 assets,” says Kris Jenkins, Workfront’s Senior Director and strategic technology partners. “If I’m a partner looking for a particular ad photo of a green Under Armour sneaker, a search of the metadata coming from Creative Cloud could pull up a hundred different shoes. How do I know which one is for the campaign that I’m running?”

In early 2019, Ben realized that an integration between Workfront and Under Armour’s Adobe tools could solve this problem, enabling a holistic view of an asset — from its creation to its performance in the market — in a way that could scale with the brand’s growing footprint.
Integrating asset storage with asset work

Working with Adobe and the strategic technology team at Workfront, Ben found this integration to be simpler than expected. “The API was extremely easy to use,” he says. “We didn’t even have to ask them for anything to be able to integrate with our DAM, which was great.”

Quickly, Ben’s team was able to create a project template inside of the DAM and link their Adobe Experience Manager asset identification numbers to relevant projects, tasks, and files in Workfront. “That whole process was really streamlined and a great experience for us,” he says.

As a result of this integration, anytime a new asset request for a campaign is created in Workfront, the system automatically creates a single unified ID — or Workfront ID — for that asset. It then also racks the project, campaign, brand channel, and other data relevant to the asset.

Taking automation, efficiency, and scalability to the big leagues

One year later, Under Armour’s Adobe-Workfront integration is enabling the brand to eliminate inefficiency and increase the velocity and effectiveness of their content across their global marketing operations. Teams have embraced this new ability. “We’ve gotten great feedback,” Ben says. “It’s been very well received.”
The partnership between Adobe and Workfront enables Under Armour’s team to skip the more cumbersome, manual processes of the past. “Our Adobe Experience Manager integration allows the Creative team to push it directly into Adobe Experience Manager Assets,” Ben explains.

For instance, once an asset has been reviewed, finalized, and approved in Workfront, it is automatically pushed into Adobe Experience Manager where it can join other assets and be deployed in campaigns, saving team members precious time previously spent uploading files manually.

The automatic tagging of each asset with important metadata — especially metadata previously unavailable in Adobe Experience Manager, like campaign or brand channel — is making creative assets drastically easier to find. Not only does it save time previously lost manually tagging assets, but it also restores time lost trying to guess the right tag for the asset in question. “We’ve made a lot of progress in centralizing our assets and providing a great search experience,” Ben says. “It’s a lot easier to find those assets and really deliver a consistent message.”

Especially for partners, this improved search experience eliminates waste on duplicated efforts, increases speed to market, and improves their consistency across the global brand. “Partners know that they can come in and get the particular assets for the campaign that they’ve been assigned to,” explains Ben. “It’s very easy to look up the project now. All of the associated content is there, finalized and ready for their use.”

However, the benefits of these capabilities go beyond just easier search and brand uniformity. “Every brand is trying to deliver personalized CX,” Ben says. “All this effort around the organization and tagging of assets makes it easier for us to lead Under Armour’s personalization effort. It sets the stage for us to display images that are more relevant. For example, if we recognize you’ve regularly bought running shoes, we can notify you when a colorway becomes available that’s similar to one you’ve previously purchased.”

Finally, this new layer of metadata enables Under Armour to go beyond just campaign and content velocity. “This is more than just producing more content faster,” says Kevin Lindsay, Director of Product Marketing and Strategy for Adobe Experience Manager. “This is really about optimizing content for campaign efficiency and effectiveness. It’s about process performance, how we are achieving against the stated KPIs from end to end.”

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Kris Jenkins, Senior Director, Strategic Technology Partners, Workfront
Anticipating a winning season

What the Under Armour team has achieved with the Adobe Experience Manager-Workfront integration is just the beginning. They see opportunities to build greater connectivity between Adobe and Workfront for even smarter tagging and building links to Workfront’s proofing tool or enhancing reporting.

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“We have raised the bar for what’s possible with DAM and project management,” Ben adds. “It’s been great to see the impact, but we are just getting started.”