

Gaining the Competitive Advantage With DAM

Elevate your brand management to win with customer experience



What is a digital asset management (DAM) solution?

A DAM solution is a technology system that businesses use to manage, organize, secure, and distribute digital assets — including photography, videos, documents, audio files, rich media, and more — from a central repository

Marketing environments today are tough. They are global. They are crowded. They are multi-channel, multi-audience, and multi-complicated. And to top it off, consumers expect more. To win their attention, money, and loyalty, you need to deliver on the granddaddy of it all — a customer experience that's second to none.

But, you know this better than anyone. Some days it might feel like you're on a perpetual treadmill, racing to position your brand ahead of the competition.

So how do you win the customer experience race?

At Acquia, we know it all starts and ends with your brand. By putting the absolute best brand face forward, you'll deliver a superior experience to your customers.

Here's how we see it. Your brand is the culmination of every experience a person has with your organization. Every time a buyer talks to a customer service rep, watches a video on your website, sees one of your ads, or reads a resource you created, it leaves an impression. Over time these individual moments add up and take hold, eventually defining the very essence of what it means to be your brand.

We see our customers as invited guests to a party, and we are the hosts. It's our job every day to make every important aspect of the customer experience a little better."

Jeff Bezos

Founder and CEO of Amazon

So while you can't tell people what to think, you can use your digital assets — the videos, images, sales collateral, and other content that represents your brand — to influence their thoughts. By organizing and centralizing your assets, you'll arm your teams with the content and tools they need to tell your unique story, deliver solutions, and build authentic, lasting connections with your audiences. In other words, you'll manage your brand in a way that drives perception-molding customer experiences.

In this guide, we'll discuss five brand management essentials needed to deliver a superior customer experience, as well as share stories about how leading organizations use DAM solutions to position their brands ahead of the competition.

Brand essential #1

Flawless brand consistency

You've likely experienced some of the challenges that come with growing a business. For one, as you expand and explore new and exciting channels and markets, managing your brand becomes more complicated. The processes and tools that your teams have always relied on can quickly start to buckle under the pressure of it all. Your once stable and consistent brand can begin to unravel.

But what's the reason for all of this?

Of course, there are a lot of factors at play, many of which are unique to an organization. However, based on research from Hubspot, the dramatic increase in content might have something to do with it. [According to their recent findings, 70% of global marketers actively invest in content marketing, and nearly a quarter of them plan to increase their budgets in 2020. Not only that, but buyers increasingly prefer rich media content like video — which is the number one preferred format used in content strategies.](#)¹ Creating all of this new, quality content for your audience is necessary, but it's also costly and time-consuming. You need an effective way to manage all of it to ensure you're getting the most out of your investment.

Additionally, as your business and content grow, so do your teams and the need to deliver a cohesive brand story. Disorganization can easily set in. What was once an organized shared drive can quickly devolve into a messy and unmanageable breeding ground for off-brand, expired creative. If people can't find what they need, they may struggle to communicate your brand consistently. These inconsistencies hurt the way consumers perceive your brand. They undermine the relevance, recognition, quality, trust, and reliability of your entire company.

A critical way to effectively manage your content investment and promote brand consistency is to ensure that everyone who communicates your brand has access to the same high-quality, on-brand digital assets. A DAM solution gives you a central, searchable location to store and manage your entire digital content library. It ensures that everyone throughout your organization has a secure and reliable place to access your content on demand.

Also, unlike storage alternatives like Google Drive or your local servers, a DAM system has controls in place to combat brand inconsistencies. Capabilities vary by DAM vendor, but most DAM platforms allow you to track and manage creative versions, schedule asset expiration and release dates, and publish embed codes that will automatically update an asset across your digital channels based on the master file stored in the system.

Our marketing team is committed to visual design, so we use digital asset management to help safeguard and scale our design. One of the main reasons I wanted to get the DAM system was to ensure we're consistent with our visuals."²

Niklas Radmacher
Director of Group Marketing
at NKT Group GmbH



Global social media platform makes their universe of brand materials “so much smaller.”

Challenge

With hundreds of creative assets and complex workflows spanning teams, continents, and time zones, Hootsuite struggled to maintain a consistent brand. Digital assets were scattered across desktops, Google Drive, flash drives, and hard drives. File after file had inconsistent and incoherent naming conventions, making it hard for teams to find the digital assets they needed. As a result, people inadvertently used inconsistent, expired images, videos, and other content across channels and markets, damaging the brand Hootsuite worked so hard to create.

Solution

Hootsuite now uses a DAM system to provide their global teams with a single source of truth for their growing and ever-changing library of digital assets. By housing their creative in a central, searchable system, users can instantly access the brand’s approved assets. And using a DAM tool (Portals), Hootsuite can even curate assets for non-system users with specific asset needs, such as media kits for press contacts, content for event teams, and campaign materials for external agencies. System admins can also quickly shift user permissions in response to changing business needs and expire assets in one fell swoop, preventing teams from using the wrong content.

Results

Hootsuite no longer worries that their global teams are using old creative or representing their brand inconsistently. With more streamlined workflows, Hootsuite can move quickly, putting their energy toward more productive efforts like creating better content than their competitors, driving subscriptions, and helping other companies around the globe gain the same great efficiencies.

“I would say the real central value that Acquia brings to the Hootsuite brand is on making the universe of brand material so much smaller. People know where to go and they can have confidence that when they find an asset that it’s been created by the brand team, it’s on brand, and it’s released for use.”

Curtis Foreman
Senior Editor at Hootsuite

Read more about Hootsuite’s story

<https://www.acquia.com/resources/case-studies/hootsuite>

Brand essential #2

Memorable creativity

When you think about the world's most creative brands, who comes to mind? It could easily be Procter & Gamble for its tear-jerking "Thank You Mom" Olympics creative. Or, Apple for its steadfast ability to capture innovation, simplicity, and excellence in every product shot. Whoever the winner is in your mind, they all have one thing in common: an undeniable capacity to create envy-worthy content.

Action point

Ask your teams questions to gauge the efficiency of current workflows and processes.

How many reviews does each piece of content undergo before it's final?

How often are you asked to recreate files that already exist?

How much time do you spend producing and saving multiple file formats (e.g., JPG, PDF, TIFF, hi-res JPG, low-res JPG)?

Is it challenging to prioritize creative requests and update teams on the status?

How are creative edits and requests handled (e.g., via email, hard copy)?

What non-creative activities take time away from more creative, productive work?

By tapping into an emotion — be it joy, love, nostalgia, or even the desire to be part of something bigger than oneself — you fuel authentic experiences. It's through these experiences that you get what we call "the sticky factor." This is the good stuff, the connections that leave a lasting impression with your audiences and give you the competitive advantage you're after. But, this is easier said than done. On top of skill, collaboration, iteration, and direction, creativity takes time.

To find more hours in the day for creativity, your teams need to reduce the time they spend on non-creative, non-impact work. From bringing on new martech tools to system integrations, artificial intelligence (AI), and automation, most brands are finding innovative ways to support and accelerate the creative processes of their teams. In fact, according to recent research from Salesforce, senior marketing leaders rank "innovating," "improved use of tools and technology," and "modernizing tools and technologies" as top priorities.³

This correlation between innovative technology and efficiency is well known within marketing organizations. However, there's more to it than awareness. Regardless of how and where you are innovating and integrating tools and technologies into your everyday workflows, you need to understand what your creative teams are up against. [In a survey of 600 creative and marketing leaders, 77% cite the "speed at which creative teams are expected to work" as one of the top challenges facing teams today. Additionally, 72% also specify the "volume of demand for creative work" as another top challenge.](#)⁴ With challenges like these, there are likely inefficiencies that technologies, such as a DAM solution, can help with. But, before adding another technology to your martech stack, make sure you have a firm handle on where your greatest time-saving opportunities lie.



“We are the founding movement, so whether we like it or not, YMCAs across the globe are going to look to us and see how we are doing things. Thanks to Acquia’s DAM solution, YMCA Wales & England can set a positive brand example for YMCAs near and far.”

Palmer Hestley

Senior Officer of Brand and Marketing at YMCA England & Wales

Well-known youth organization frees up time for the right kind of creativity using DAM technology

Challenge

With 116 local YMCAs and 90 charity shops, YMCA England & Wales struggled to present a consistent brand across marketing initiatives and locations. Professional-looking and on-brand marketing materials and digital assets existed, but nobody could find them in a maze of shared folders. Further, without in-house designers at many locations, staff spent significant time patching together communications and marketing collateral using clip art, off-brand photography, and other random fonts and digital assets. Teams were being “creative,” but this was not the kind of creativity that helped the YMCA England & Wales brand.

Solution

YMCA England & Wales brought on a DAM solution to help their various teams quickly find and discover the beautiful creative assets and content that exist within the organization. Instead of spending time hunting for photos, images, and more, teams can now filter or search by specific parameters like gender, age, mood, or activity, and discover the best assets for the job. They also use a DAM tool (Templates) that allows non-designers to customize their own brand materials without the help of a designer. YMCA locations can now quickly create professional, on-brand marketing materials and communications to support their unique audiences, events, and efforts.

Results

Staff at various YMCA England & Wales locations are no longer wasting time on the wrong creative activities. Local teams have access to the on-brand images, photos, and digital assets they need, and they have an on-demand tool to quickly create localized materials. Plus, the marketing teams can redirect their time and energy from policing the brand to more productive and creative work.

Other time-saving DAM system capabilities

Self-service, on-the-fly conversions of file formats

Integrations with creative tools for seamless asset sharing

Streamlined workflows for creative requests, proofs, and approvals

Metadata-powered search which makes finding assets intuitive and easy

Analytics to inform and optimize where content creators spend time

Read more about the YMCA England & Wales story
<https://www.acquia.com/resources/case-studies/ymca-england-wales>

Brand essential #3
Sales enablement

You know how important the sales channel is. After all, it's your direct line to customers. Your sales teams are critical in fueling positive customer experiences that drive competitive advantage and revenue. But often, with everything else your teams have going on, your sales channel doesn't get the mindshare it deserves. Take marketing for example. All too often they are focused on their next big campaign or resolving a workflow hiccup. As a result, they may fail to get sales teams the content that's needed to communicate with buyers.

Sure, your sales teams can make do. However, given the modern-day complexities of the sales process, do you really want them to? Without on-demand access to sales collateral, demo videos, and other on-brand content they'll struggle to meet buyers' needs at different points in the no-longer-linear buyers' journey.

So how do you bridge the gap between marketing and sales?

According to the State of Sales Enablement, an industry report summarizing the responses of sales and marketing professionals around the globe, you need technology. Findings show that the 56% of teams using sales enablement technology have win rates that are 7% higher than those that do not. And when specifically talking about sales content and asset management tools, the 44% that have and use them see 4% higher win rates than those that do not.⁵

"Coca-Cola is the only business in the world where no matter which country or town or village you are in, if someone asks what do you do, you never have to answer the question 'what is that?'"

Muhtar Kent

Chairman and former CEO
of The Coca-Cola Company

Technology and brand consistency

Coca-Cola is the poster child for brand consistency. No matter where you are in the world, you're greeted with the same iconic cursive logo and brand experience that stirs up feelings of familiarity, authenticity, and positivity. With sales and marketing teams spread across the globe, brands like Coca-Cola would struggle to control their brand image without the help of technology.



Distilled spirits brand uses DAM to upgrade its workflow and enable sales.

Challenge

At Heaven Hill Brands, the largest family-owned distilled spirits company in the U.S., the marketing team knew it had a problem. As the nearly 90-year-old brand grew, team members felt increasingly sharp growing pains in one place: their FTP server. Lovingly referred to as “the dinosaur,” the file transfer server had long ago become the place where the marketing team stored all of their brand assets. Over time, this presented several problems. Not only was the FTP-hosted asset repository difficult to search and navigate, but the technology made it difficult to share access with others, bogging down the marketing team with asset requests. Sure, you can always share FTP login info, but doing so limits your ability to control who has access to what and runs the risk of files getting permanently deleted by accident. For the brand’s growth to continue without friction, something had to change.

Solution

The Heaven Hill team recognized their FTP workflow couldn’t keep pace with their business growth, so Heaven Hill launched a request for proposal (RFP) process for a DAM system — and selected Acquia in 2017, allowing them to move away from the FTP server, open up access to assets, and empower their sales team.

Results

Once implemented, Heaven Hill’s DAM system initially housed 13,900 assets and gave access to 182 users from the sales team – with thousands of additional assets being added each month, including archival material that helped to tell the brand’s story since its launch in 1935. With a DAM platform as a single source of truth, Heaven Hill can not only store, organize and manage access to its growing trove of brand assets, but it can track statistics on that usage over time.

[Read more about Heaven Hill’s story.](#)

“The assets in our DAM system serve as critical content that our sales team needs to drive our business. From sell sheets that show our products, to overview brochures that tell the unique selling points of our brands, they arm our sales team with the tools they need to sell our products.”

Laura Crahan

Creative Services Manager at
Heaven Hill Brands

Brand essential #4
Speed to market

In today's copycat kind of world, it's just a matter of time before a competitor offers a similar service, product, or solution as you. To have the competitive advantage, you need to run faster than your fastest competitor out there — innovating, creating, communicating, and solving two steps ahead of them.

As you've seen, organizations rely on a variety of methods, tools, and processes to improve their speed to market. From Agile practices to AI technologies, big data, and automation, a lot is happening behind the scenes. But what do the most successful organizations have in common? According to Salesforce findings: It's largely about the integration of marketing technologies. "High performers," or those global marketing leaders that are completely satisfied with their marketing performance, outcomes, and investments, are nearly five times more likely than "underperformers" to also be satisfied with the integration of their data.⁶

And this makes sense. Integrations allow you to streamline information between autonomous systems, act faster on marketing and creative decisions, and automate elements like data, information, and content distribution from a central hub.

But before you can integrate your technology systems, you need to figure out the unique martech architecture that works for your organization. This looks different for everyone. But considering that marketers list "advertising and promotion" and "content and experience" technologies as the top two technologies their companies need to invest in most, you may want to anchor your stack with a content-focused technology like DAM.⁷ By controlling your brand from a central source of truth you can seamlessly power the people and tools that communicate it. This saves you time, helping you reach your customers faster and with a better, more consistent brand experience.

Improve your tech ROI

High-performing marketing organizations are nearly 5x more likely to be satisfied with the integration of their data than underperformers.⁶

"Organizations need to keep embracing innovation and new technology models. At the end of the day, it's about getting from point A to point B quicker than everybody else."

Rollin Ford
CEO of Walmart

Action point

Improve efficiencies with a mind-mapping exercise to help consolidate systems, identify underutilized functionality, and optimize processes.

Draw a process map highlighting how your technologies and workflow processes currently intersect.

Flag inefficiencies, complicated processes, and gaps where technology is needed.

Brainstorm system functionalities you need and map them against current provisions to identify gaps and redundancies.

SIMPSON

Strong-Tie

Global supply company supercharges operations with system integration

Challenge

Simpson Strong-Tie is one of the world's largest suppliers of structural building products. They have a large and nuanced SKU base that is constantly changing. Without a single source of truth for their photos, illustrations, videos, marketing collateral, and other digital assets, the speed and accuracy of their workflows suffered. Rather than putting their efforts toward more productive activities, the team burned time searching for files, weeding through duplicate versions of the same asset, manually packaging and sending materials to partners, and constantly fixing incorrect product images across their digital channels.

Solution

To get all of their technology “talking,” Simpson Strong-Tie integrated their DAM solution with their other go-to marketing systems — their design software, product integration management (PIM) platform, and sales-enablement tool. This means that they have a single source of truth and master file for their digital assets. If a new logo or product image is uploaded to the DAM system, the assets are automatically available for designers and sales teams within their design and sales-enablement tools. If a product image for a certain SKU changes, it's automatically updated in the PIM system, and therefore accurate on the website. No more searching. No more errors.

Results

Integrating their DAM solution with other day-to-day marketing technologies helps Simpson Strong-Tie reduce errors associated with duplicate image files, create valuable workflow efficiencies, and get approved, on-brand product images quickly to market via their e-commerce site. “It's worth the money we're paying for it because we've implemented it in a lot of places.”

Read more about Simpson Strong-Tie's story

<https://www.acquia.com/resources/case-studies/simpson-strong-tie>

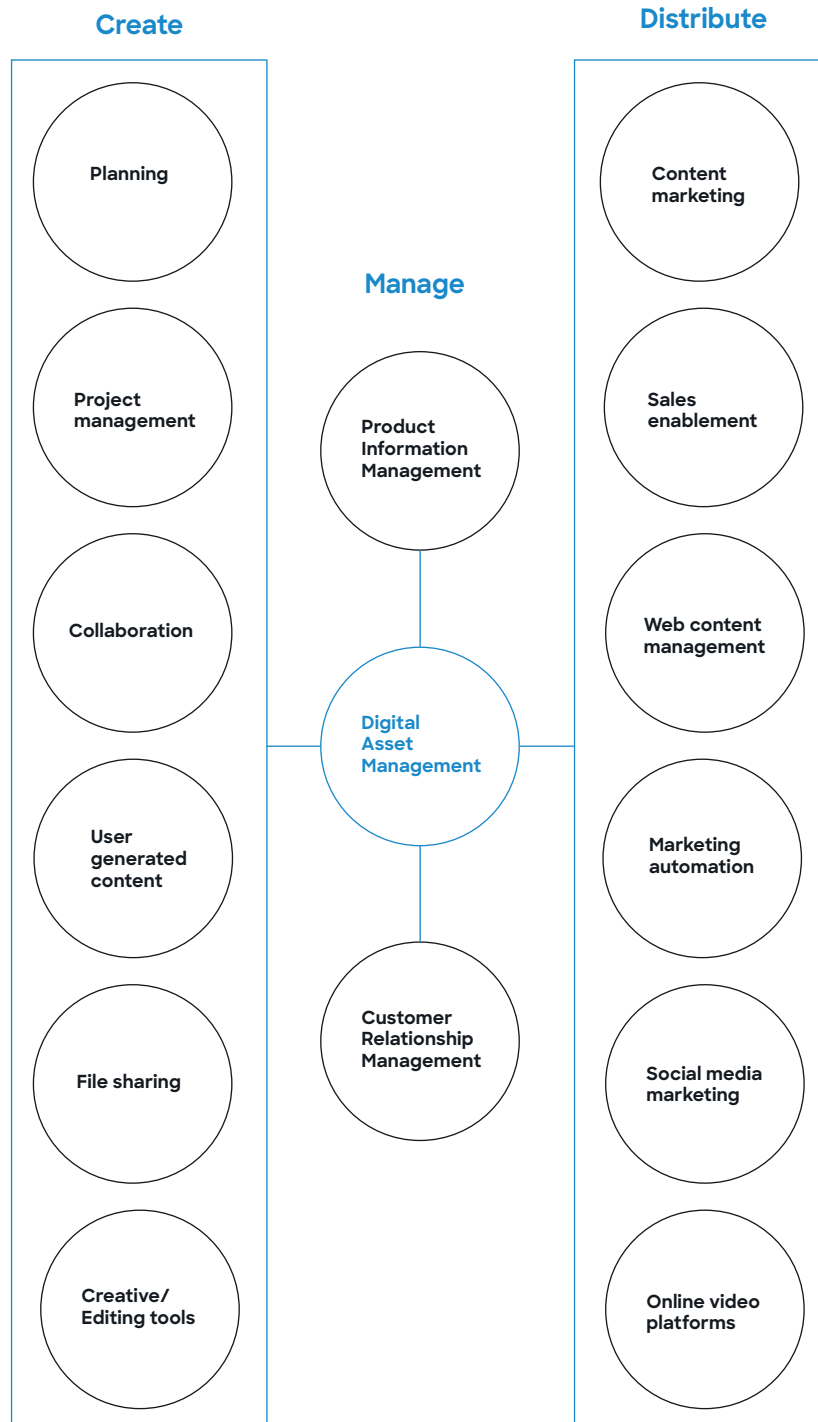
“The DAM is definitely a core technology for our marketing day-to-day.”

Mark Hausler

Senior Graphic Designer
at Simpson Strong-Tie

DAM as the anchor technology for the entire martech stack

A brand management hub for faster people and technology enablement



Brand essential #5

Risk mitigation

Of course, nobody intends to put their organization at risk. Yet we see the headlines time and time again — “millions lost to copyright lawsuit,” “exec ousted for data loss,” “system crash leads to irreparable damage.” The list goes on and on.

While the digital age brings much opportunity for advancement, it also invites unwelcomed risk. As a marketing leader in this high-stakes environment, it’s your responsibility to put the right safeguards in place to protect valuable brand intellectual property (IP), such as your digital assets. Considering that nearly half of business-to-business (B2B) marketers expect their content marketing budgets to increase, and of those using paid advertising, 38% shifted paid advertising dollars to content marketing, this is likely an area you cannot afford to ignore.⁸

So, what options are available to protect your valuable brand investment?

Risk mitigation benefits of using a DAM system

- Single source of truth
- Cloud storage and data redundancy
- Roles and permissions
- Release and expiration dates
- Analytics
- Intended-use tracking and approval
- Alerts and notifications
- Searchable metadata
- Watermarked previews
- Attached docs
- Approval workflow
- Download approval
- End-user license agreements (EULAs)

For starters, having a storage and governance strategy can help shield against risks, like brand-damaging content misuse, legal trouble, and lost or stolen IP. This looks different for every organization. You may rely on home-grown solutions, such as on-premise data backups and documented processes outlining the cans and cannots of digital asset use. And, while this may work for some time, it’s not always sustainable. On-site or on-device backups can lead to a mess of duplicate assets, file sizes, and data that take up valuable space and make it tough for teams to find what they need. Documented processes and brand guidelines, while necessary, are easily misplaced or overlooked without a central, visible place for teams to access them.

As you assess your unique business needs, consider if a DAM system is right for you. A DAM system helps you manage and protect your brand throughout the entire content lifecycle, from creation to preservation and beyond. With its rule-based back-end structure, it allows you to control who uses your digital assets and how, where, and when they can use them. This coupled with robust analytics, gives you and your entire team the transparency needed to keep your assets and brand safe.

varian

Hundreds of thousands saved with content monitoring analytics

“Content analytics are so valuable. You may not think that you need them now, but it’s a good practice. This is your intellectual property, so you want to safeguard it and monitor who’s using it. You just never know when something will happen.”

Sandra De Biasi

Project Manager of Digital Assets and Graphics at Varian

Varian, a leading provider of cancer treatment software and hardware, uses DAM technology to store and manage their growing library of sales collateral, technical specs, product videos, and other valuable digital assets. They use a strong governance plan and the system’s analytics tool to monitor not only the performance of their content efforts but also to understand if their dispersed user base is adopting the system.

It was through this careful data monitoring that Varian was also able to detect unusual vendor behavior and stop a potentially catastrophic security breach. After noticing that an approved vendor in China had downloaded 90% of the total assets living in their DAM system, Varian identified the user, expired their access, and escalated the issue. As a result, Varian saved themselves what they determined to be hundreds of thousands of dollars in stolen IP.

Read more about Varian’s story

<https://www.acquia.com/resources/case-studies/varian>

Acquia

Integrated apps that manage the complete content lifecycle



Assets

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



Entries

Enrich product data with marketing copy and digital assets for distribution.



Insights

Track and measure assets and build site performance dashboards.



Portals

Curate collections of assets and create personalized brand experiences.



Templates

Create localized web-to-print collateral on brand and on demand.



Workflows

Streamline collaboration, reviews, and approvals with online proofing.

Giving your customers the superior experiences that differentiate your brand takes time, attention, and support.

As you continue to grow your business, think about how your current brand management practices are helping or hindering your ability to outpace your competitors.

When you're ready and eager to take your brand management to the next level, we're here for you.

Want to check out our DAM solution?

Visit <https://www.acquia.com/platform/digital-asset-management> to request a demo today.

Notes

- 1 Hubspot, Not Another State of Marketing Report, March 2020, <https://www.hubspot.com/state-of-marketing>.
- 2 Acquia, 2020 Acquia Connectivity Report: The Value of Visual Design In a Connected Marketing World, January 2020, <https://www.acquia.com/resources/reports/2021-connectivity-report>.
- 3 Salesforce, Sixth Edition: State of Marketing, May 2020, <https://www.salesforce.com/form/conf/6th-state-of-marketing/>.
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- 8 MarketingProfs, and Content Marketing Institute, B2B Content Marketing 2020: Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends — North America, October 2019, https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2020_B2B_Research_Final.pdf.

Acquia

Acquia empowers the world's most ambitious brands to create digital customer experiences that matter. With open source Drupal at its core, the Acquia Digital Experience Platform (DXP) enables marketers, developers and IT operations teams at thousands of global organizations to rapidly compose and deploy digital products and services that engage customers, enhance conversions, and help businesses stand out. Learn more at <https://acquia.com>.