Marketing driving creative and sales teams in digital supply chain — Interview with Matthew Gonnering, Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Widen Enterprises

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is the vice president of sales and marketing for Widen Enterprises, Inc. Gonnering manages the sales and marketing operations, customer relationship teams, product direction and helps shape the organizational strategy for Widen. He has helped shape Widen into a marketing-led organization resulting in significant growth for software-as-a-service products. Gonnering has worked in several roles at Widen to include field sales, tactical marketing, and sales and marketing management. Prior to Widen, Gonnering worked in the printing and publishing industry representing Master Litho, Inc. and Krause Publications in sales and marketing roles. Gonnering holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from St. Norbert College and is completing a master's degree at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Abstract   A conversation between Michael Moon (MM) and Matthew Gonnering (MG) discussing marketing, sales, and creative operations and the changing processes as a result of new technologies. Marketing teams become sponsors of the change shaping the behaviors of sales operations and contributing to the creative workflows. Michael and Matthew discuss the roles and trends of sales, marketing and creative teams and the effect Web 2.0 has had on the process. In their conversation, they isolate how Widen has advanced their marketing services and product line to include screen cast video production and expansion into an on-site digital embassy complementing the hosted platform.

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MM: We're here with Widen Enterprises. If you will, start off with just a brief introduction.
MG: I am Matthew Gonnering, currently serving the role of Vice President, Sales and Marketing at Widen. As part of this role, I oversee sales and marketing operations that include inside and outside sales teams, channel development, web strategy, market research, promotions, customer relationship management and product management.

I have been with the organization for eight years and in that time we have rapidly evolved into a software–as–a–service provider positioning ourselves across three main functions; sales enablement, creative support and marketing execution. We have assembled cross–functional teams to solidify our position in these areas using our Madison–based marketing, customer support, development and infrastructure personnel.
MM: Excellent.

As I recall, at the Henry Stewart DAM and MOM symposium, you're the guys that run around in the white doctor smocks?
MG: That's Jake, he's our web strategist and plays doctor in our promotions highlighting our Dr. DAM brand.
MM: Dr. DAM, huh?
MG: Yes.
MM: Excellent. It's a great brand. It's a nice, memorable kind of visual icon. It also speaks to a leadership position in the category. So, good work in terms of developing that little brand icon.
MG: Thanks, Michael.
MM: Let's go through each of those three categories that you've just kind of touched upon. Would you give us kind of an update in terms of key trends, developments and sales operations.
MG: With respect to sales operations in the markets we serve, we find that field sales reps are not using the content and materials that

marketing wants them to use. Field sales reps are notorious for using outdated information but it's not necessarily their fault. Marketers need to make sure the most accurate content is easily available. The marketers also need to make sure they are constantly creating materials that meet the objective; whether it's new customer acquisition or cross-selling, the content needs to be appropriate.

The trend is marketing-driven organizations — I am sure that term has been dropped thousands of times and possibly laughed at thousands of more times by everyone who doesn't have marketing in their title — but what does it really mean to be marketing-driven organization?

An example of what a marketing-driven organization does is spearhead change. Even if you are good, you can be better as an organization by constantly seeking enhancements to a process by deploying software applications that embrace the brand. Part of embracing the brand is implementing systems that enable sales operations to use marketing content — might be presentations, custom ads or brochures, cool videos, product images — but sales operations must use it with self-service access so that they get when they want it without interrupting the marketing operations flow.

Self-serving software applications free up the marketers from ongoing sales requests allowing more time for pursuit of new products, social marketing techniques and customer research to meet the next wave of demand.

Marketing is starting to respond to the sales need but sales operations needs to live in a marketer's world and embrace the changing processes and systems surrounding that process.

MM: To what degree have you seen the emergence of various Web 2.0 kinds of applications in the context of "collaborative selling?" Specifically, where sales people or service executives now interact with buyers or customers through the web — be they from online spreadsheets, wikis, instant workspaces and other sorts of web-conferencing tools?

Not just access to customer information, but more real-time synchronous interaction using Web 2.0 kind of technologies. Be they an EditGrid or Google-doc spreadsheet. A Zoho sheet, Instant Workspace from [View] or wikis that you might get from [Alacion] or whomever.

How have sales operations started to engage customers using these more collaborative Web 2.0 tools?

MG: We see this from two perspectives: (1) as our customers use it with Widen and other cool marketing technologies and (2) as a sales force that uses it for our own market pursuit. For starters, we can isolate audio/video technology from Web 2.0 universe, which has been the single largest impact and the most significant addition to the sales repertoire to reach customers.

A few examples include video-casts, podcasts, video case studies, instructional videos and training seminars. These tools have been critical components of connecting the emotion and excitement of the organization to the customers.

Other great ways in which Widen and our customers use Web 2.0 are through blogs, feeds, wikis and forums. These allow consumers to interact with sales operations, but they are really communicating with the entire enterprise that is represented by sales operations. Marketing floods the audiences with Web 2.0 stuff so customers can actively contribute and help shape the future of the business. Marketing-driven organizations are really customer-driven organizations on steroids because the product managers need to interpret the unarticulated demand of the marketplace.

In many cases customer and sales tools are being used through portals that are fed from web services integrations behind the scenes. Customers don't even know they are interacting with systems from San Francisco, Madison, Paris or London. Web 2.0 portals contain detailed processes with defined structures that look real simple to the customers and sales teams — that is the point of all the complicated work upfront — to make it simple for the users.

MM: Matthew, one of the things that this suggests is that — as customers — consumers… Whether they're in consumer markets or B2B markets… Buyers have become much more self-directed. They're going online and using various aspects of social media, be they blogs or forums or other sorts of instant messaging. Live Help.

They've become much more interactive and self-directed.

MG: Absolutely.

MM: As a function of that, all kinds of media — particularly rich media — be they audio, video — webcasts — now play a much larger

role in the awareness and consideration, trial and purchase activities of consumers.

From a sales operation perspective, does this mean that salespeople are now more facilitating interaction and conversation as opposed to persuading and convincing?

MG: The role of sales operations has changed drastically with the customer ability to find the information they need more quickly — the expectation is instant information — the customer wants it now and if they don't get it at that moment in time, they move on and you lose. The typical sales channel and process to connect customers with information is painfully slow. Salespeople have to change to be the facilitator of marketing messages. These messages just aren't pre-written letters, they are blogs, wikis, feeds, videos and mobile apps that customers want to learn from. Sales trust is earned by how many cool things your marketing team gives you to show off to customers. Customers respond to how your organization uses Web 2.0 to interact with them.

MM: As sales people become more facilitators of online interactions and conversations with customers, not only are they facilitating or directing or orchestrating the flow of content or information — they're also now beginning to direct or orchestrate the provisioning of new services to buyers.

Can you speak to that second-wave effect of now just not provisioning content, but provisioning services to self-directed buyers in that collaborative selling context?

Could you speak to how the sales operation continues to evolve, tracking ever more sophisticated interactions with buyers? Such that salespeople not only facilitate a conversation and the flow of information, but sales operations are now facilitating the provisioning of online interactive services to consumers. Be they a product configuration or product configurator or an RFP generator? Or some sort of resource-planning tool? Or other sorts of ways of envisioning how a complex integrated system might work for a particular customer.

MG: Now that the role of persuasion has been minimized and facilitation increasing, the facilitation carries forward to implementation in the case of software services. Most software apps are user configurable so when the customer says go, it's ready to setup. The sales role helps to ramp this configurations up more quickly by communicating best practices or pointing customers to the forum of users that talk about best practices. Sales operations must have inside-out product knowledge and a service aspect of what they historically never had to worry about.

And while they serve as some type of "configuration coach" they can also flush out a few more applications you should be using — for a price, of course.

Some customers are completely self-serving. You can use examples in the CRM space like Salesforce.com. You make a buying decision and you're configuring your own CRM within minutes. You can obviously hire consultants but sales operations have even taken on a consultation role as well. When you get a call from a customer you recently acquired, a familiar string of questions might be, "How can I advance this product? What do you recommend? What do you see other customers doing to solve this? How can I be part of user groups and other groups that are talking about your product?"

MM: Absolutely.

MM: One of the things we've seen as it relates to Rich Media are what I've heard called "Screen Cast Explanations," or "Screen Cast Demos." I can't tell you the number of salespeople who have called me — wanting me to buy some service or something. In their e-mail, there's a link to a YouTube demonstration. Not of a talking head, but actually a movie — a narrated movie — of the actual product screenshot. Opening the file, doing the transforming.

They're describing an oftentimes very complex or esoteric online operation. But they create a video of the operation or procedure — narrating and contextualizing — giving meaning to what's going on on the screen. Thereby, conveying verbally the value proposition of this complex operation. That's what we call a screencast explanation. These are becoming much more the bread-and-butter or tools of sales operations — directing and orchestrating these videos.

Have you seen these kinds of things in the customer base of sales operations that you serve? If so, can you talk a little bit about that?

MG: Absolutely, we practice it and we preach it. In 2007, we transitioned every piece of written

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marketing material — the alphanumeric characters that exist on pages — and we've transitioned all of that to video.

All of our products have moved to a narrated video. Some of them are weaved in with customer stories. Some of them are educational videos explaining — like you mentioned before — the value proposition. Telling them their current situation that can be affected as the result of deploying this product.

Some of our product videos explain the customer situations whereas some explain the product features. Some also co-exist and we weave the situation and features together. We go out to our customer community and interview them — allowing other people to see the impact — we're bringing our customer stories to the marketplace.

Our customer videos are available at www. widen.com/videocasestudies.

The impact we're able to achieve is that we can communicate more clearly what the application can provide. It doesn't create a disconnect between what the buyer wants and what the seller is delivering. It forces the visualization of what the buyer thought it might be into something that it will actually be. This is important because when we exchange information in written and verbal form, there are a lot of unknown visual expectations created. Videos allow us to mesh buyer and seller thinking. In the end, satisfaction levels remain high because they knew what they were getting.

MM: This goes to two fundamentals of good marketing. First — good marketing always demonstrates the need for a product or service. Good marketing doesn't explain it. It doesn't tell stories about it. Good marketing always demonstrates the need for a product or service. It then shows the fulfillment or satisfaction of that need — and in so doing, eliciting the experience of relief.

So, screencast demos and testimonials of somebody who shows the need that they have… Demonstrates the need they have… And then shows how they've satisfied or fulfilled that need using a particular service… Expressing the emotion of relief… That's about 80 per cent of the job of marketing.

The second aspect that you've also highlighted here, Matthew, is that the visual cortex of the brain processes visio-spatial data 5,000 times faster than you can read. Another way of saying that is, a visual cortex is a big fat type for conveying a tremendous amount of information.

Reading is a thin little straw. Think of it as almost a 14–4 dial-up, versus a T3 line. To the extent that we can communicate visually, auditorially, dynamically, we are conveying all the difficult things associated with a new way of doing things: context; social interaction; cause-effect; hierarchy; precedence and correspondence. All those things that take pages and pages of text to explain, you can now telegraph in a second, 2 seconds or 5 seconds. So that's really great work.

Would you speak then to the production process? And some of the tools and processes that you use to create these screencast demonstrations?

MG: When we decided that we were going to move into screencasts we had a decision to make; we can do it ourselves or source it to a video production company. We opted to do it ourselves.

We invested in a Canon XHA1 HDV for video equipment and a videographer with support staff to help with the editing and video production.

MM: And the video-editing system. Is it a Mac or a PC? Final Cut Pro? Avid? What did you use?

MG: We used Final Cut Pro. Mac.

MM: Sure.

How do you do the voice narration?

MG: We have a recording studio at Widen. We set up a soundproof room and selected a Widen employee to be the voice of Widen.

MM: Another great brand strategy. To have a voice of the brand.

MG: Exactly. The "voice of Widen" then goes into our recording studio and they'll practice the script a few times. Scripts are written by our marketing teams and product managers. The audio recording is taken separately from the video. Our lead videographer will then take the audio track and overlay it on the video. We'll take video of someone sitting at a workstation walking through the product demo. The final deliverable is a clean HD video.

Our product demos are available at www. widen.com/demo.

MM: Cool. So do you use any of the screen-capture tools such as SnapZ?

MG: We don't use SnapZ for this but we have used Camtasia — Cam Studio on occasion. Our video production is cross-platform.

MM: Fabulous.

Matthew, we were talking about the underlying tools for creating these webcasts — screencast explanations and demonstrations, and how these screencast demonstrations and video testimonials have really played a pivotal role in being able to communicate to demonstrate the value proposition. To communicate the emotions associated with what it feels like as a user. Any other kinds of neat tools like that, you've seen in sales operations?

MG: Not to the dramatic effect that video has had. The social channels like Facebook and LinkedIn are underutilized — but their impact is trivial in comparison to video and the video distribution channels. The acceptance of all this stuff is another issue — you have people who don't know the world without the internet, people who learned on a typewriter and people who carved stick figures into rock formations. The audience is fragmented but video seems to be the one that brings everyone together — click, watch.

MM: Let's use this as the point to shift into MarComm operations. We've already referred to that as the tighter coordination — collaboration between sales operation and MarComm operations. MarComm operations represent the group of people who are in charge of sourcing creative materials and making sure that it has a clear brand voice and a consistent value proposition and other sorts of material that are part of the corporate storytelling.

Could you give us a reprise or summary of key developments and trends that you've seen in MarComm operations today?

MG: MarComm teams that are driving messages into Web 2.0 channels and exposing sales operations to what's possible if you're willing to take a leap of faith. The MarComm teams are the champions of change. They're the people who are embracing revolution then infiltrating this methodology throughout sales and creative operations. MarComm teams are the controllers of the content and have final say. Decisions that they make and words that they write have ramifications well beyond just their sales operations counterpart. It has ramifications throughout the entire marketplace. They can flood it with a message that they want, whenever they want to, and within a matter of seconds.

MM: Fabulous.

Let's drill down on a couple of those topics that you just brought forward. First, let's talk about the overall sourcing activity of creative content and services. What changes have you seen in how sophisticated marketing operations or MarkComm operations now specify, bid, acquire or procure creative services and content?

MG: In our situation, in the corporations that we're exposed to, the creative teams are in the same facility. The creative is not a source to external vendor. Creative is an internal supplier to MarComm.

The way creative teams communicate with marketing people is initially nonverbal. When marketing wants something done, there's not an e-mail sent, no calls placed; there is some automatic message generation from a system that marketing is using as their project management application. This triggers the creative team to take a certain action that typically involves a creative brief that has a summation of concepts and project requirements.

Those creative teams will have marketing representation in them because marketers need to have a voice. It's imperative that the marketing team has influence in that creative decision because the message is being created by marketing.

MM: Fabulous.

If I may summarize, MarkComm operations now have more of an integrated set of tools, such as project management and collaboration — by which they start to create marketing briefs, market plans, media plans and so on. At that point, that project management collaboration platform notifies members of the creative team of an upcoming project. Thereby, coordinating their showing up in some sort of creative briefing or creative discussion. That then produces an agreed-upon creative brief. Did I get that right?

MG: You got it.

MM: We're saying then that the creative brief today is more of an output of collaboration and interaction — much of which takes place in person in terms of in-person meetings?

MG: Correct.

MM: As we've seen technology move through sales operations and MarkComm operations, how have these online systems changed or transformed either the structure or content of a creative brief?

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MG: I would say that the structure and the content of the creative briefs are probably more concise and more accurate out of the gates because you've got cross-functional teams contributing well in advance. The cross-functionality of these briefs is not assembled after the first draft and subsequently in the routing to multiple departments; they're assembled as the concept evolves.

You're also able to get the final message to market more quickly because you've got the conglomeration of diverse thinkers with unique backgrounds and experiences, contributing simultaneously.

MM: To what degree does a repository of previous campaigns — both creative briefs and then ultimately the final work product — a collection or library or repository of past creative work and execution — now inform and/or speed the creation of new creative briefs and subsequent executions?

MG: Measuring the success of these campaigns as a result of going through this process then revisiting the tactics used upfront will help shape future campaign creations. It helps provide a measuring stick of how many routes a creative brief went through and how much attention was given to it — who were the key players working on it.

Central repositories of campaign data also allow simultaneous access to give transparency throughout the channel. Then everybody knows what's going on which makes decisions easier to justify because all the information is available at your fingertips.

MM: I was trying to get more to the institutional memory embodied in a library of past, completed work. Let me give you an example. I had a conversation with the people at The GAP. They have a large digital library of all of their campaigns, and all of the creative material that went into last season's line of clothing, as well as the MarkComm and in-store stuff that went into that.

In subsequent, contemporaneous meetings, oftentimes the creative director or the merchandiser or the brand manager says, "Hey. Didn't we talk about that two seasons ago, but we discarded it? I think that idea has now matured or ripened. I'd like to bring that forward and refresh it a little bit."

The idea is then that the DAM repository or the MarkComm asset repository becomes a living institutional memory of past executions as well as outtakes. It can then add or enhance or add new dimensions to current executions and current creative thinking and the whole ideation process.

MG: Well said.

MM: Have you seen particular examples of that in your client base?

MG: Not to the degree of The GAP example but there is marketing copy and creative concepts in briefs that don't ever go anywhere. They are revisited on occasion, initiated from memory, "Oh — I remember we did this two years ago…" The systems support this with the ability to search on creative briefs and marketing copy that was assembled in a date range. It goes back to the core DAM capabilities of searchable repositories — in our case — creative and marketing information that's available at any time. It resurrects items that already have hundreds of hours associated with them — allowing for a realization that the value of DAM is critical to supporting creative operations.

MM: One other dimension that I wanted to speak to, here. In the creative process of coming up with a new campaign, we've seen in some other more advanced MarComm operations that have a pretty mature DAM in them… As marketers want to spend new money, they use an online form to specify or to define a new project.

In the course of defining this new project, they use this project definition form or service to replace the internal purchase requisition paperwork. But in addition to replacing the purchase requisition or the budgeting allocation process, this project-definition form now has specific key performance indicators or goals that this particular marketing spend should achieve, such as number of brand impressions, downloads, transactions and Leads to channel.

Have you seen in your client base this notion of now incorporating marketing metrics in the actual planning process and procurement process or project-definition process?

MG: Absolutely. The more measures of success that are established upfront, the more informed every contributor to that campaign can be throughout the process, the better the campaign is served. Everybody knows what the

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expectation is. You can align all the resources to the same ultimate goal.

Sharing that information is absolutely critical. I think our customers do a good job of filtering that information throughout their channels.

An unnamed example of an organization in the manufacturing market has expectations regarding performance of both the marketing and creative team. In order to embark on a new project there is a need to justify the resources and place measurements on the progress. These measurements are not financial measurements, they are based on several criteria that include creativity levels, completion time, and collaboration with cross-functional teams. In this instance it also involves an external advertising agency that also has measures but helps to coordinate the internal marketing and creative teams.

All of the people who have a touch point with a campaign are made aware of the expectations. This level of transparency allows the left hand to understand the objectives of the right hand so when the campaign is ultimately deployed, the measures of success are clear.

MM: This will be a good place to shift into the creative operations. What developments and trends you've seen within creative operations. Specifically, how they've undergone a change or organizational transformation in lieu of the emergence of this digital marketing supply chain.

MG: I think the creative workflows have probably needed to change the most. In their creative bunker they're somewhat sheltered from annoying marketing and salespeople who want everything now. They are opening up the elements of their process and inviting the marketers to help with the deliverable.

MM: It's almost like a fish tank at this point. Huh?

MG: Everybody's swimming together without the threat of sharks.

MM: Could you speak to three areas that specifically creative operations has some pain around? 1 — in terms of clear, succinct, "This is what I need to do?" That's really going to be project definition and collaboration. The second is the workflow, with an emphasis on review and approval. And third — automated publishing techniques, so they can do it once and have people personalize or customize it as they will,

without necessarily chewing up a bunch of their primetime authoring hours with just administrative things like changing this (doc for that doc).

MG: With respect to the project definitions, the creative management teams have significant say with respect to what the marketers are requesting to be completed. Really, those project definitions are being assembled and started on the marketing front, and then filtered into creative for their contributions.

Project definition gets back to the cross-functional creative and marketing teams. They're being assembled in conjunction with marketing. And the project definition itself — in some cases — is still traditional. You're getting together and drawing on a white board. You may take a picture of that white board. You may put schedules in a spreadsheet. The more advanced organizations creating a best practices model have already engaged in project management systems that are tightly integrated with DAM systems.

MM: Before we go into the workflow part, Matthew — one of the things we've heard on a very consistent basis from the creative teams is basically the scheduling piece. Scheduling — that is to say before a project becomes a project — there's this pre-project planning thing. It's really a scheduling. Do we have enough resources to be able to execute these 20 projects concurrently, for example?

MG: Right.

MM: Could you speak to (1) the function of that scheduling capability? And (2) some of the breakthroughs or advances you've seen in how to orchestrate a symphony of Cats?

MG: Well, to herd these creative cats we find it is normally under trafficking control — a dedicated department controlling schedules.

MM: Yes. But trafficking is for funded, active, on-a-deadline projects. That tends to be pretty procedural with Step 1, Step 2, check, pass-no-pass. That sort of thing. Right?

MG: Yes you are right, but I also see trafficking monitoring all the conceptual things that are prior to any formal release. There is a definite need for a formal scheduling process supported by an application that embraces automation but people have to use it, religiously. The common backlash from creative resources is that they don't want to be scheduled. A common outtakes

from creative scheduling meetings include, "being scheduled places my creative thought on a timer and you just can't do that."

I haven't found an organization that has the perfect solution that can be replicated across multiple industries, or even within the same industry for that matter. What I do know is that a combination of effective management, flexible scheduling and an appreciation for the creative mind wrapped in software applications that enforce workflow rules is a good starting point. The ribbon on this is holding people accountable for the results.

MM: I'm really trying to get to the notion of scheduling being the bridge between the creative management and MarComm operations. That is to say, "Oh — we're thinking about launching this particular set of projects, and it'll probably consume XY and Z amount of creative resources."

Traditionally, the MarComm operations just throws it over the wall and says, "Hey. Get to work." Creative operations say, "Hey. We've already got more work than we can do in an 8-hour day." There tends to be a structural conflict in terms of load balancing future work.

MG: True.

MM: So if I understand you right, that particular area remains kind of unaddressed in terms of any kind of an online system to (1) understand what the implications are of future things, and then negotiate a balancing of the load across available creative resources.

MG: There are scheduling systems out there — I don't see any that have been deployed as successfully as one might think. There doesn't seem to be a silver bullet so yes, you did hear me correctly.

MM: We talked about the project definition and the scheduling piece. Would you now speak to the changes that you've seen in terms of workflow? With an emphasis on the review and approval process for creative content.

MG: It's light-years faster, as a result of file routing through centralized creative and marketing systems. The marketing and creative teams are assembling copy and designing the material while software applications enforce the workflow. The workflow rules are the responsibility of the marketing and creative management; collectively establishing upfront what rules are appropriate for approvals.

All the approvers are now reviewing and commenting on the project with ownership and time stamping that allows feedback to be gathered much more quickly without ever printing a piece of paper or attaching a file to an e-mail.

MM: Matthew, one of the things we've seen emerge in that creative review-and-approval process… We've seen these things that we're now referring to as, "Instant Workspaces." The ability to invite people into an *ad hoc* meeting, share a rich media file, do voice annotations and mark-ups — on the file itself — and then pass that on to other people who were not real time or synchronous. So it has a store-and-forward capability, as well. Have you seen these kinds of technologies or capabilities emerge in the creative workflow?

MG: Not too heavy on voiceover functionality. With respect to webcasting, there is the standard Webex and GoTo Meeting that's pretty common across our customer base for instant meetings but they don't use it for audio or video.

MM: They don't really support A/V.

MG: That's why, then.

MM: They're really a Web 1.0 concept. That's why I personally don't like them. I actually say unkind things about them like, "They suck," and they create these big nasty hairballs of recording files that are essentially useless to anyone subsequently wanting to review them. But that's just my opinion.

MG: Sure. Loud and clear!

MM: Could you now speak to the third element you were talking about in the creative operations? That's more of the dynamic publishing and dynamic media capability that offloads a lot of the little fit-and-finish or customization activities that creative people usually get sucked into, because somebody doesn't have PhotoShop or Illustrator or InDesign or something like that?

MG: Automated publishing is basically taking all the content, graphics, tables, charts and whatever else they're creating and automatically placing it into an InDesign page, as an example. The selected InDesign page already has parameters that preset copy and graphics placement. Then it can ultimately go to a final high-res PDF where it doesn't get touched any more but more commonly the designer has last rights to it by taking a peek at the InDesign file and making some last-minute tweaks to it.

But the design elements of an automated publishing workflow are really established in advance. Libraries of design ideas in a pre-established template doesn't have to be limiting, either. There could be thousands of those pre-established templates; it's up to the organization. The designers determine that page style, and then the rest of it is just done through systems automation. Within the Widen architecture, we have catalogue publishing systems that use InDesign Server that allow us to flow content into the pages.

MM: To what extent has the requirement for localization — where you take an English-language design master — be it an InDesign or Quark or Illustrator file — and then subsequently speed the translation of the text and regionalization of the imagery so that we can more quickly achieve a global concurrent launch across 40 or 50 native languages?

MG: A Fortune 100 customer we work with leverages Widen software applications to enable field reps to build materials in multiple languages. We've enabled internationalization of their marketing materials where the user is empowered to create the material that they feel is relevant for the selling or marketing situation. They're prompted with language selection first then the rest of the content presents itself in the appropriate language.

The content and images are in a neutral state. When copy is called upon to be German descriptive copy, it presents itself as German descriptive copy. They're all just waiting to be used. The self-serving user creates the marketing brochure and can have it printed or used on the web.

MM: I'm curious more to the actual process of creating the inventory of translated text. Do you use a translation outfit? Or translation memories? How does that work?

MG: Our customers have translation agencies that we support. To obtain the most accurate translations, it translated in advance and then managed in a content library. The problem that we ran into with dynamic language translations is that the translated copy doesn't deliver the same meaning in a grammatically correct form. It is not a pure translation.

MM: Exactly. It requires a human being familiar with that particular culture and the norms of that culture to do all of the final fit-and-finish and nuance. The machine translations — more specifically machine-translation memories — really get about 50–60 per cent of the translation work done, and the rest has to be done by hand.

MG: Right.

MM: With a large international company such as the one you mentioned, the new ad material gets created oftentimes with a global advertising agency — who's charged with coming up with a global campaign and a consistent global brand voice. That usually precipitates in the form of a finished ad and finished copy that then is distributed to their local countries to localize. Or to a translation center or an international MarkComm operations group that does the localization work.

Can you share with me the typical cycle time it takes from, "We've got a finished ad," to, "Now it's all localized and ready-to-go," across Europe, Middle East and Africa?

Do you have that information?

MG: Finished ad to localized versions with furnished translations can be ready to go within hours.

MM: As we conclude on our interview today, I'd like you to speak a little bit about software as a service, or provisioning services from your data center. What are some of the opportunities and challenges that you've had as a provisioner of software as a service?

Matthew — one of the useful distinctions I've heard is that there are ASPs — which are application service providers… So if you got Microsoft Exchange, a service provider will have you license Microsoft Exchange. They'll put it on one of their servers and administrate it. But ASPs tend to be a single-instance of an application, hosted for a particular client — who oftentimes is the license-holder to the application. That's typically an ASP.

And MSP — a managed service provider — generally has a data center. They're running things like web services. Multiple websites with one, two or three instances of CMS systems and databases.

They're basically saying, "Okay. I'm managing a bunch of infrastructure, and making it available to you as a managed service."

Then we have software as a service. That tends to be what they call "multi-tenant" architecture. That's single instance of the code with multiple logical partitions within that database. As a function of having one instance of
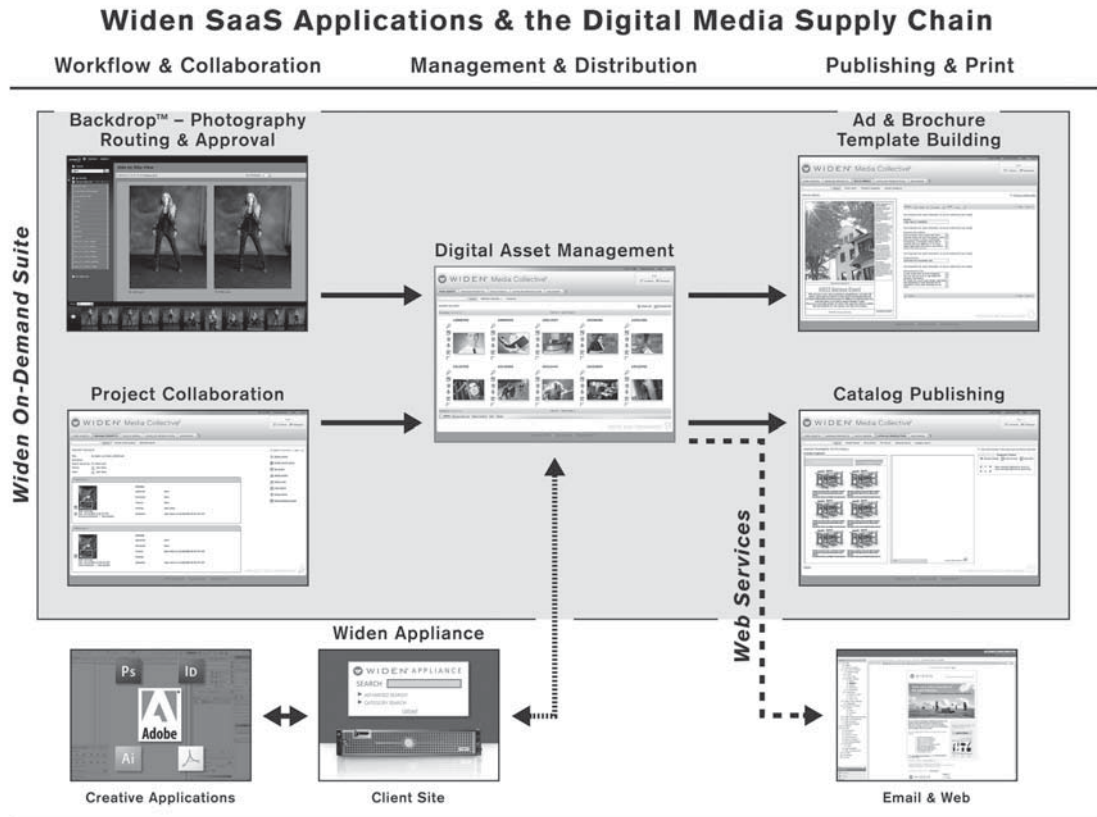
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Widen SaaS Applications & the Digital Media Supply Chain

Workflow & Collaboration　　**Management & Distribution**　　**Publishing & Print**

Figure 1: Diagram of the Widen product overview within the digital marketing supply chain. The center of the digital marketing universe is digital asset management. Widen positions other applications upstream to accommodate workflow and collaboration and downstream to drive publishing, both print and web

the code, the manageability of it tends to be much more direct. It tends to be more mission-critical, but more direct. It also means that you can add incremental updates fairly rapidly and everyone benefits across the user base.

In that context, how would you characterize Widen as one of those providers?
MG: Widen has products that would be categorized into the software-as-a-service and managed services definitions — but they are joined together.

As a software-as-a-service provider, we introduce significant enhancements at four-month intervals. This cycle allows to discover, document and release functionality that the market is demanding alongside our own proactive thoughts on what the market will want down the road. Our teams are aggressive and diligent in an effort to make a big splash with every release.

At the core of our DAM, we've always embraced the external distribution of files

to the world. Some of our customers have over 15,000 users from all over the world. They all come to one location, find what they need and move on. There are other product advancements Widen has made that positions DAM at the foundation. The applications we have invested in involve marketing and creative support (Figure 1).
MG: Hosted DAM has been great for the marketers but the biggest problem with the hosted provider has always been accommodating creative audiences. Designers, videographers, prepress agencies are working with files that are hundreds of megabytes if not hundreds of gigabytes each. They're not going to be victim to internet speeds, it doesn't make sense.

Use cases for hosted DAM deteriorate at the creative level. To expand the DAM that marketers love to creative audiences involved a product expansion. Widen released an appliance — which is an on-site software/hardware
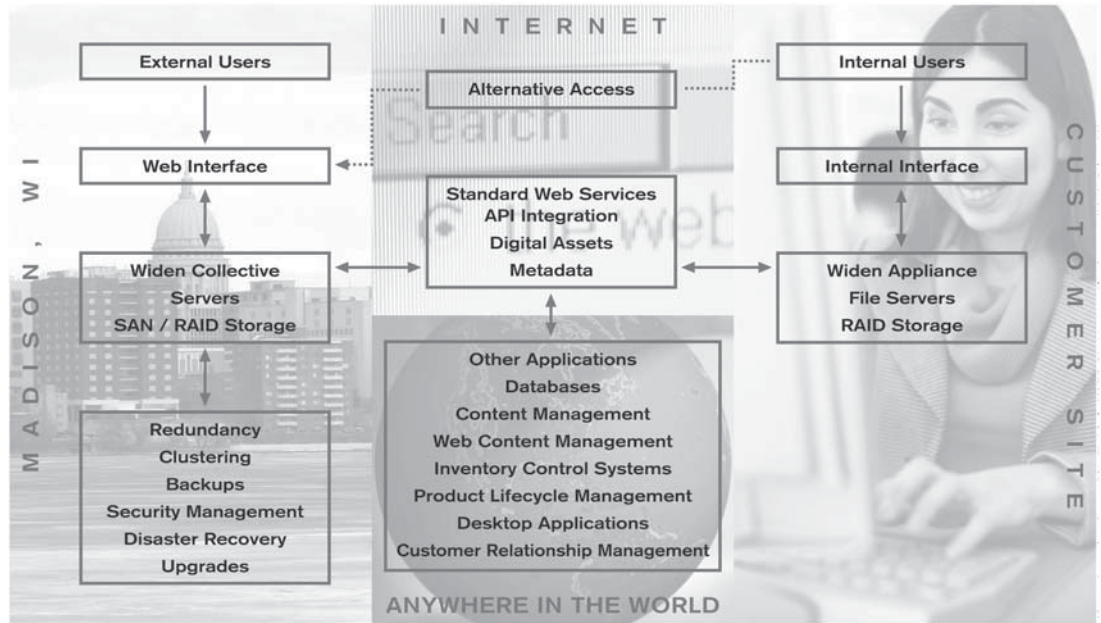
Figure 2: Widen® Appliance In Action (also available at www.widen.com/appliance). Widen extends the software-as-a-service product line to include an on-site replication of data for internal consumption integrated with the hosted platform, which is meeting the external demand for digital assets

combination that is integrated with our hosted platform. It has fully replicated set of data so the digital assets can be consumed at local speeds.

The creative benefit is working at local speeds to access the same files that the sales and marketing operation teams around the world are accessing. There's a search API allowing customer-side developers to create their own search interface and we also continue developing different interfaces for creative teams.

The IT benefit is fully replicated data in my infrastructure. The historical IT objection to using a hosted provider was basically IT saying, "I'm not going to put all my data in somebody else's data center. I want to keep it here." So we say, fine, you can keep it there.

MM: Security blanket. That is to say, "All of my mission-critical data is onsite, inside my firewall." Two, it provides a nice way of synchronizing the databases probably in the middle of the night when nobody's using it. And, three, it gives the local creative people who are all speed demons, anyway — that is, "if it's less-than-a-second's response time, something's broken." So it gives them the ability to work in and out of a local cached repository of their assets at 100T or gigabit speeds, without necessarily whacking the

bandwidth out as a function of working from the cloud.

Is that a fair characterization?
MG: That's a great characterization.
MM: Fabulous.

Could you describe this node? Sometimes I refer to it as a digital embassy. It's a sovereign state within a sovereign state. This box or node, I would imagine you're thinking about adding new application services to. That again would synchronize and coordinate with stuff that's in the cloud. Is that a fair characterization of the future roadmap?
MG: It's a fair characterization of the future roadmap. Yes.
MM: Cool.
MG: Examples of Widen appliances in action are with the Adidas/Reebok design team. There are appliances in multiple geographic locations — it's like a privatized content delivery network just for their creative team. They're working on things at local speeds but communicating with each other. Workflow rules are enforced like digital asset versioning, locking and check-in/check-out (Figure 2).
MM: Point-to-point.
MG: It can be configured as point-to-point or using one location to serve as the hub —

Widen implementation teams determine this after site evaluations and customer preferences.

MM: Obviously you have the ability to manage it remotely. Right?

MG: Right. Our infrastructure team installs the appliances with the appropriate IT resources on the customer site. They spend a few days there and once it is plugged in, we control and monitor it from Madison.

MM: Fabulous.

And this node — this embassy — will it also then have a database by which to keep track of the transactions and interactions? Or is it simply just more of a file server with some communication hand-shaking capability?

MG: The most common configuration in the early stages has been a file server with Widen software and communication ability. There are some configurations that we've already done that have remote databases as well. That's really a custom configuration with usually some other elements required.

Our market research for this product is imperative — especially with more complicated digital assets like video — identifying whether we put additional software capabilities all the way to that box or use our main data center to generate certain activities — the combination of our subject-matter experts, market research and customer sampling will give us the direction.

MM: Absolutely.

One of the interesting rumors I've heard — and we'll probably see it announced in the next couple months — perhaps at the Worldwide Developer Conference… But we've heard that Apple is going to bring Final Cut Pro available as an on-demand service.

MG: Interesting.

MM: That's why, when you look at their financial reports, they've had such a big build-out of their data center, putting in these massive storage systems and bandwidth out.

As we begin to start thinking about this creative workspace, you're really demonstrating how much of the functionality of a big data center or a big media-services platform starts to get distributed in a more logical and more efficient way, by putting computer power and storage and metadata nearer the points of high bandwidth or high volume consumption.

MG: Correct.

MM: That's a trend that I would expect to continue, if not accelerate.

MG: It's our anticipation that it accelerates. We've invested in doing this because the combination of hosted and on-site meets the needs of both marketing and creative teams. It just makes sense.

MM: Just to summarize it — is it a Linux box or Windows?

MG: Windows box usually starts with a terabyte of storage and goes up from there — but it is really configured depending on the customer situation.

MM: One last point on that. Do you see many of your creative services groups or your MarComm groups trying to integrate Microsoft Sharepoint or MOS, as they now call it, to the Widen capabilities? Or are those simply stand-alone and look at each other but don't really collaborate?

MG: We don't see that so maybe they look at each other from across room but no integration that we've done with Sharepoint. No real demand for it either.

MM: Fabulous.

MG: The demand we do see and is for CRM integrations with Salesforce.com — a handshake between DAM and CRM to enable sales teams in the field to use marketing content that is being shared with creative teams. So we've deployed our DAM on the AppExchange to meet that demand.

MM: Excellent.

Before we close here, Matthew, are there any kind of last comments in terms of things that we touched upon but maybe didn't fully develop, or any kind of forward-looking discussion points that we might come back later and pick up on?

MG: When we talked about screencasting the one element that I need to emphasize is the role of the DAM provider. It is absolutely critical to have a solid DAM in place before producing screencasts or you are creating a sizeable problem — a problem that doesn't wait to show up in a few months, it shows up as soon as the files do. It's all well and good that you just made a bunch of screencasts, but your method of distribution has got to be spot-on in order to facilitate the community of people with that video.

MM: That's a great point to end on.

Matthew, thank you so much.