

Campaigning for Groceries at GA Communications

The Canto Environment for Structuring the Flow of Digital Assets for Advertising

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A Cutting-edge Advertising Agency

Racing around the clock

As a cutting-edge advertising agency with a portfolio of brand named retailers, GA Communications prides itself on understanding its clientele and capturing their marketing needs. Managing the media campaigns for major national and regional grocery chains is a race around the clock—continuous promotions, time-sensitive changes, and the ever-present appeals to consumers' tastes and wallets.

Consumers need to connect the visual information they find in newspapers, on television, and on the Web with the fresh foods and packaged goods they buy in supermarkets. In the grocery industry, advertising drives sales. Yet in this high-volume, low-margin business, retailers also need to control their advertising costs and focus on the effectiveness of their spending.

Making assets available across the enterprise

GA Communications competes through its technology investments to expedite the production of electronic and print-based advertising. "When you launch an advertising campaign, you need to have a clear understanding of what visual assets you have," says Marc Konik, vice president of information technology. "The key is to consolidate all your assets and make them available across the enterprise."

To this end, GA Communications first acquired Cumulus from Canto in 1999 and has steadily developed an enterprise repository of digital assets—including product photographs, logos, and page layouts—for its major accounts. GA Communications now manages upwards of 400,000 assets, and adds more than 10,000 new assets per year.

Always an innovator, GA Communications adopted QuarkX-Press as a desktop tool for interactive page layout and design in the late 1980s. Over the years, the company has steadily sought to implement online workflows that link the steps in its graphic design and production processes.

Lessons learned

- Build on the capabilities of a shared repository. It is important to index and store all of your digital assets within a digital asset management system. Once you organize your assets, you can begin to use them in business processes.
- Integrate desktop tools with the digital asset management system. End users prefer to work in a predefined environment—such as a desktop graphical editor. Ensure that they can easily and seamlessly access all of the content stored within an underlying repository.
- Identify the value-added steps in your business processes. Focus first on the outcomes and the end results, then rely on electronic connections and automatic workflow activities to link together the work tasks of team members.

The Cumulus Advantage

Cutting a week out of a three week process

As an enterprise scale digital asset management (DAM) solution, Cumulus has had a major impact on advertising productivity. When developing a single page display ad or multi-page promotional brochure, the creative team working on the account can quickly locate the product photos they need within Cumulus, and then incorporate them into a page layout tool such as QuarkX-Press, to produce the advertising copy, suitable for a newspaper ad or in-store brochure.

No longer do photo archivists or production traffic coordinators need to sort through the collections of digital files that are randomly stored on hard drives and CDROMs, or order new photo shoots for the images they cannot find. All of the assets they need are available online, organized and tagged by SKU numbers and keywords.

Thus a traffic coordinator, responsible for coordinating the contents of a display ad or promotional brochure, can:

- Take the list of products to be included in the promotion, developed by the merchandisers
- Easily query Cumulus to find the needed photos
- Quickly identify the missing photos and schedule the photo shoots
- Catalog the new photos
- Ensure that the graphic designers have all the assets they need to layout and produce the display ad or brochure

“Using Cumulus to expedite the production activities of our creative teams, we’ve cut one week out of a three week process,” Konik reports. The net effect for grocers is more affordable and effective advertising campaigns.

The platform for a self-service environment

Moreover the business benefits of Cumulus are not limited to activities of the in-house creative teams. Managing digital assets within a central repository is only the first step towards a wide range of business applications.

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GA Communications also relies on Cumulus as the platform for a Web-based self-service advertising environment. Store managers can now easily produce their own advertising materials—such as in-store signs and the copy for local newspaper ads. Here's how it works, as shown in Illustration 1.

- When store managers want to launch their own campaigns, they log into a branded Web site which is powered by Cumulus.
- Next, store managers search through the approved photo collection and find the product photos they need.
- Finally, store managers paste the pictures into a predefined template using their familiar desktop tools, add the local pricing information, and publish the local advertising on-the-fly.

Store managers can do all of this on their own, without involving the creative teams back at the agency. This in turn reduces advertising costs. Creative teams do not have to spend time on local advertising. The end result is a win/win situation—an online environment where store managers can easily develop the professionally produced collateral for driving their own advertising initiatives.

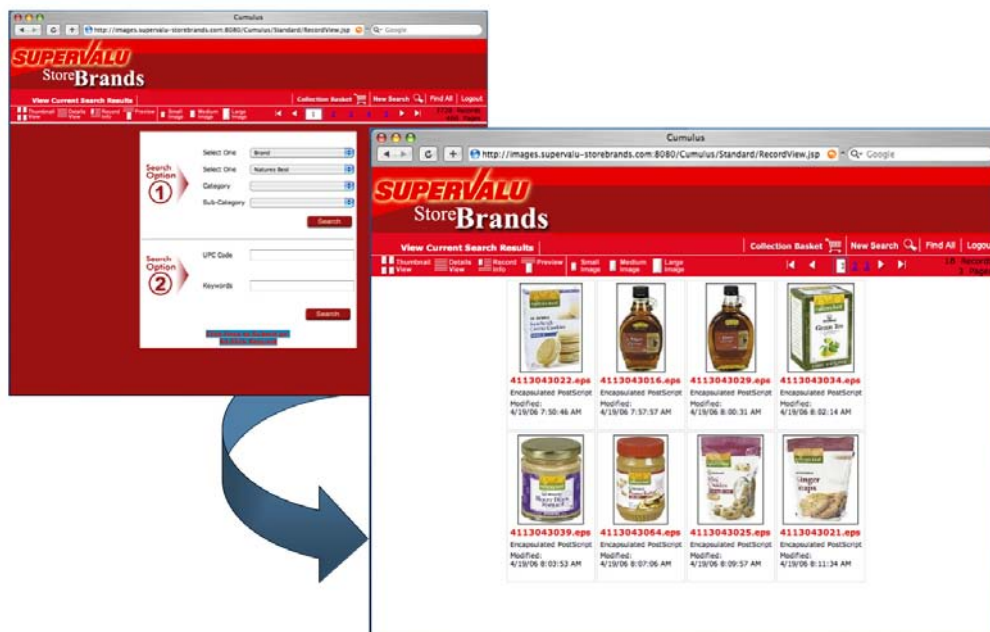


Illustration 1. Store managers can log into a branded Web site and search through an archive of product photos, powered by Cumulus. They can then select the photos they want, download them to their desktops, and use PC-based tools to produce their own marketing materials.

New Solutions from Canto

Improving the effectiveness of creative teams

This is only one example where GA Communications is continuing to focus on improving the effectiveness of its creative teams and enhance their abilities to produce promotions for brand named retailers. New tools and technologies delivered over the Internet help to ensure that the agency remains competitive and delivers high value services to its clientele.

New products and solutions from Canto help fuel these initiatives.

Adding enterprise workflow with CanFlow

Specifically, Canto is now adding enterprise workflow capabilities to its product portfolio. Canto has recently announced CanFlow, an enterprise workflow product for DAM, that easily structures and links the business processes across an organization. CanFlow promises to transform how creative teams, developing advertising copy, will work with colleagues in related departments – such as merchandisers who decide on the products and pricing for promotional events – to improve business processes.

Once it deploys CanFlow, GA Communications will be able to accelerate its advertising production schedules and remove many of the repetitive, manual steps that hamper its business processes. Using CanFlow, merchandisers are going to be able to work seamlessly with the creative teams who develop the advertising copy.

- Rather than sending traffic coordinators the product lists and then reviewing their photo selections—a back and forth exchange requiring paper-based processes and real-time phone calls -- merchandisers will be able to identify the product photos on their own.
- Relying on a workflow process implemented using CanFlow, merchandisers will forward the selected photos to the graphic designers who layout the copy, and also notify the traffic coordinators about the needs for new photo shoots.
- Designers will be able to have merchandisers review the initial versions of the ad copy online, electronically annotate changes to the text, layouts, and photos, and approve the final version of the copy for publication.
- Traffic coordinators will be able to expedite their tasks, such as ordering photo shoots, retouching the finished photos, and forwarding them to the graphic designers for production.

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- Managers will be able to easily check on the status of various projects, manage activities within projects, identify bottlenecks, and ensure the timely flow of advertising activities within the agency.

CanFlow is based on a set of customized workflow templates, as well as integrated trigger and event mechanisms. CanFlow delivers the workflow design environment—a graphically oriented workflow design tool—for specifying the steps in the business process, and identifying the tasks that the various participants need to perform. Finally, CanFlow provides a management environment for tracking workflow activities. CanFlow capabilities are based on widely-adopted open-source technologies, including XPDL, a workflow standard developed by the Workflow Management Coalition (WfMC).

CanFlow uses email and taskbar “alerts” for notification. Participants in a workflow receive notifications about the tasks they need to perform. They then click on the embedded links to do their work—CanFlow automatically invokes the relevant enterprise applications for performing the tasks.

CanFlow in operation

Here’s an example of how CanFlow might work at GA Communications.

- A graphic designer receives an alert about producing a new ad.
- By clicking on the link from CanFlow, she automatically opens her graphic design tool as well as the photos selected by the merchandiser.
- When she has finished the layout and refiles the ad in Cumulus, she invokes the next step in the workflow, such as automatically alerting the merchandiser to proof the ad.
- The merchandiser, in turn, reviews the ad using an Adobe Acrobat reader. Behind the scene and transparent to the participants, Cumulus automatically converts the file from an editable to a final form format.

The net effect is a seamless business process where merchandisers and creative team members can collaborate across departmental boundaries.

Integrating assets into design layout tools with Cumulus 7

Canto is also focusing on the experiences for graphic designers, and making it easy for them to find and manage assets, directly from their page layout environment. With the release of Cumulus 7, Canto is tightly integrating its DAM system with QuarkXPress and Quark Dynamic Document Server (DDS), to create a seamless online experience for creative professionals.

As shown in Illustration 2, graphic designers can launch Quark and directly log into Cumulus through a customized pull-down menu and a new interactive palette. While working within Quark, they can then select either individual images and graphics, previously stored Quark documents, multiple Composition Zones, or a Job Jacket, all managed within Cumulus. To do their work, they can drag the selected items into the QuarkXPress editor, and drop them on the editing canvas. Then, when they are finished, they can refile their work items within Cumulus, again using the Cumulus functionality available within QuarkXPress.

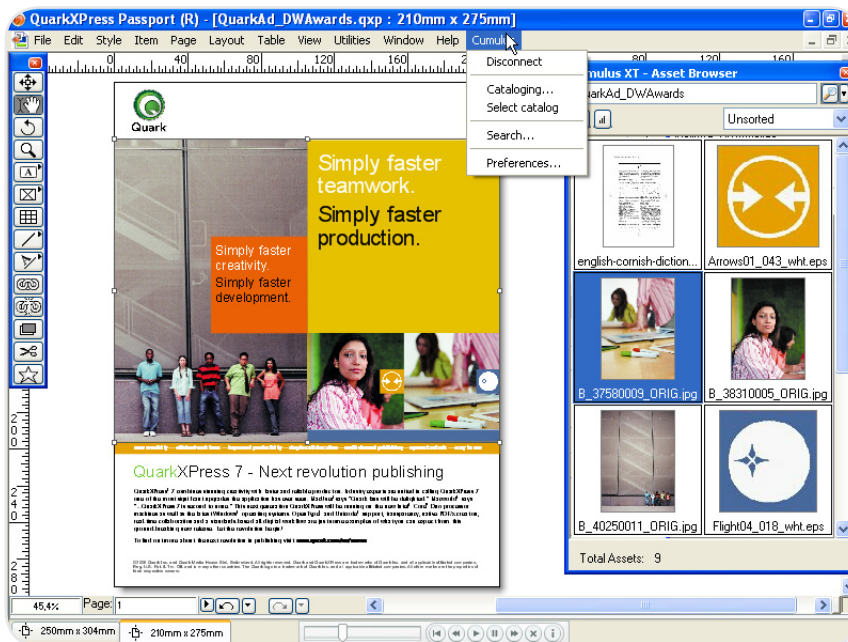


Illustration 2. Graphic designers can access Cumulus directly from QuarkXpress. They can either browse or search the archive of assets, select items and drag them into the Quark edition.

Using the DDS Companion, another new option with Cumulus 7, the repository will automatically catalog all of the Quark project files and link preselected assets to the files. As a DAM solution, Cumulus manages all of the access rights—ensuring that only individuals with appropriate privileges can access the assets, and that assets checked out by one person cannot be overwritten by another.

As a result, designers will not have to spend time searching for images within the repository and manually importing them into their design environments. Rather, they will be able to focus on doing

their work—refining the page layout designs, enhancing product images, creating the unique look and feel for an advertising campaign, and producing the copy that drives product sales.

Leveraging the Value of a DAM Solution

Emphasizing the creative design processes of advertising

For an advertising agency, the important part of an integrated workflow solution is the focus on the creative design processes of advertising. “The old model that DAM systems have used in the past no longer works for us,” says Konik from his perspective of driving information technology strategy for a national advertising agency. “Managing brand assets today requires a new kind of thinking. Cumulus 7, together with the upcoming CanFlow product and the tight integration with QuarkXPress, represent the new kind of thinking we need to move forward.”

With its emphasis on predesigned templates, an underlying workflow engine, and automatic access to an extensive archive of digital assets, Canto is changing the nature of marketing campaigns within the grocery industry. Canto is providing an integrated technology platform for transforming the business processes within an advertising agency. This is a flexible environment which can be easily customized for the business processes within an organization.

The new Canto solution—combining Cumulus 7, the integration with QuarkXPress, and CanFlow – provides the enabling platform. Now GA Communications and its clientele can leverage the value of their digital assets. They can use their assets more effectively to create the essential messages for consumers, and thus drive sales within supermarkets.

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About Canto

Founded in 1990, Canto (www.canto.com) is the leading supplier of Digital Asset Management products and services, with more than 12,500 client/server systems installed worldwide. Canto’s business focus is to deliver world-class solutions at a very competitive price to creative arts, publishing, and corporate communications groups, as well as to other industries.

The core product, “Cumulus,” is designed to manage and archive all types of digital assets used in production, publishing, communication, and other workflows. It offers cross-platform and Internet capabilities that scale from easy-to-install and low-cost archiving solutions to globally hosted DAM systems.

About Bock & Company

Geoffrey Bock, Principal of Bock & Company, focuses on business strategies for content management and collaboration. An analyst and author with over twenty-five years industry experience, he tracks how organizations create, organize, and manage business information to sustain profitable relationships.

As a consultant and thought-leader, he advises software companies, end-user organizations, and government agencies in areas of business planning, technology innovation, and operational excellence. Geoffrey can be reached at geoffbock@gmail.com.