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EBOOK

**FINE-TUNE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE**

# Use Digital Governance to Deliver Consistent and High-Quality Content

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## INTRODUCTION

Every company, regardless of its primary business focus, is also a digital content creator. Increasingly, content has become the number one way for customers to find and research your products, services and organization. So, when you think about improving your digital customer experience, having the ability to deliver consistently high-quality content is vital to attracting new customers and to expanding the scope of engagements with existing customers.

However, for many companies, their home-grown digital content has evolved erratically as it's expanded, perhaps from a single website to tens or hundreds of online touch points around the globe. Many organizations lack any clear central control over or insight into all of the digital content available or what is about to be published.

Furthermore, elements of your regional or worldwide content may be inaccessible, inaccurate and inconsistent. Such erroneous content results in negative consequences for your business including potential customers deciding not to engage with your company. So, you end up with content that's an obstacle to customer engagement rather than an enabler.

This eBook aims to present one potential solution for companies to introduce content quality control over all of their online content assets by using digital governance. The goal of digital governance is to build a system which you can use to ensure that, no matter who authored it or where it was published, all of your digital content adheres to the same set of agreed upon guidelines and best practices. This governance framework combines technology in the shape of digital quality management (DQM) software

Ensure that all of your digital content adheres to the same set of agreed upon guidelines and best practices

along with process and people. By applying digital governance, a company can define and establish the highest levels of quality for its content and then consistently meet those targets.

At the same time, digital governance is not a rigid system, it's one where an organization can adjust its content guidelines on an as-needed basis, for instance, to immediately reflect a shift in global branding or product positioning across the entire company.

So, let's take a more in-depth look at digital governance and DQM and how adopting the framework and technology can benefit your business. We'll start with the concepts behind DQM and then look at three specific areas where digital governance and DQM can make a real difference in winning over more customers in the areas of quality and efficacy of your online content:

- ▶ **Web Accessibility**
- ▶ **Discoverability**
- ▶ **Consistency**

We'll conclude with some advice on how to move forward with a digital governance strategy.

# Deliver Seamless Customer Experiences

As we discussed earlier, digital content plays an increasingly important role in helping companies attract and retain customer brand and product loyalty. As more customers conduct their own pre-purchase online research, the quality of content can be the difference between a successful purchase or a customer walking away for good.

To match or exceed customers' expectations throughout the digital journey, companies must rapidly create, publish and update targeted and high-quality content. Each piece of content has to be accurate, consistent, accessible and brand appropriate across every region, channel and device. Customers do not have the time or the patience to puzzle over flawed content that's confusing or lacks cohesion.

## **Inconsistent Content Alienates Customers**

Many companies are struggling to maintain standards in quality and consistency as the volume of required content production spirals out of their control. Contributing to this mammoth undertaking is a culture of siloed content generation that has grown within organizations. These silos mean a company is unable to police the vast amount of content which is being created or updated on a disparate basis across its brands and its regional websites.

Inconsistency in managing digital content is a serious matter and leads to a host of negative outcomes. For starters, if a company has unresolved search engine optimization (SEO) errors, potential new customers may fail

to discover its products or services altogether. It's also all too easy to lose or alienate customers with lengthy page loading times, broken website links or incorrect product availability and pricing information.

Companies also risk temporarily or even permanently damaging their brand if they present customers with inconsistent messaging, outdated promotions or off-brand elements, such as logos that are no longer in use. These kinds of inconsistencies may cause customers to question the brand's legitimacy and lose confidence and trust in the brand's offerings as a result.

### The High Price of Poor Content Management

For organizations in highly regulated industries such as financial services, healthcare or pharmaceuticals, losing control over content can have particularly grave and steep consequences. Given that the precise use and definition of words or phrases may be mandated by law, unchecked errors in content may result in fines or legal action.

Even more perilous is a company's failure to adhere to and comply with the de facto standards for accessible web design, which could ultimately result in a lawsuit. An organization needs to be able to enforce the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) as laid down by the World Wide Web Consortium and the Section 508 amendment to the US Workforce Rehabilitation Act of 1973 across all of its digital content.



Section 508 W3C

## Use Digital Assurance to Improve Content

There's clearly an urgent need for companies to gain control over their burgeoning digital content, but many organizations lack the necessary tools. In a [recent survey](#) of marketers, the Content Marketing Institute asked respondents to list the content management structures they already have in place within their organizations. While 70 percent of those polled said they have style and brand guidelines, only 21 percent have a content governance process and only 19 percent have content audit reports.

A variety of digital assurance tools are available today to help companies establish some of the necessary checks and balances to ensure consistent and error-free content. However, these tools tend to be piecemeal solutions aimed at resolving a single issue rather than handling all types of content needs. They also lack the option for easy and tight integration with Web Content Management (WCM) software.

## Digital Quality Management Optimizes Control and Insight

Digital Quality Management (DQM) software, by contrast, is an integrated and robust suite of software which offers a central point of digital content visibility and governance. DQM lets companies create custom checkpoints to automatically monitor content, guaranteeing the correct elements are being served up to customers. DQM provides reporting across a company's entire digital presence, which for enterprises, may number in the tens or hundreds of websites. An organization can also use the software to gain an exact account of how many images, PDFs and pages it owns.

Using DQM, an organization can set up rules to make sure its content uses the latest logo, the most recent legal disclaimer, the current promotional offer, tag line, color palette and fonts as well as mandate words or phrases to be precisely defined or avoided. Checkpoints for accessibility are all mapped to the latest WCAG guidelines and Section 508. DQM also monitors



file image sizes which can be optimized for faster loading, so customers using mobile and other devices aren't kept waiting for their content.

While DQM can be used as a stand-alone digital governance solution, it also can integrate with a company's existing WCM, enabling the review of content prior to publication. With this, organizations can scan for and fix issues before the content is live. It can also be used to crawl content that was published months or even years before, and flag any issues that are discovered.

### Avoid Digital Content Technical Debt with DQM

Elsewhere in the software world there are discussions about technical debt: the amount of work a company can incur if it doesn't fix problems as they occur or if it fails to anticipate and avoid such issues. If left unresolved, such issues worsen and, as mentioned earlier, could result in a company ending up in legal hot water, damaging its brand, and potentially excessive development work to address the issues.

Digital governance and DQM are the solution to technical debt in the digital content world. If a company has a strong digital content foundation set by use of DQM, it removes the risk of accessibility and other litigation, and the loss of customers and customers' trust due to content errors.

What is being advocated here is that you adopt a similar approach to creating and maintaining content as you already take to software development. Quality assurance is an integral part of all software development, the same should also be true for every piece of your digital content.

The task of content management and policing is a never-ending one. Digital governance and DQM empower organizations to more easily engage in continuous improvements of their content so that they are fully equipped to meet new challenges. ■

Digital  
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# Improve User Experience and Address Accessibility

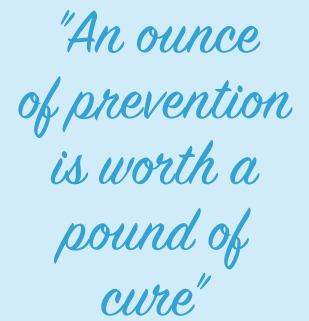
When you provide a great digital experience to each customer, you've not only likely won their immediate business (and perhaps that of their social circle), but you've also begun to establish long-term customer loyalty. But fail to deliver fully accessible digital content, and you ignore the needs of one billion potential customers, and possibly forfeit the opportunity to engage with them for good.

Ensuring every piece of your digital content is easily findable, searchable, navigable and consumable is no easy matter, but it's vital to address. After all, there is no standard online path for how and when a consumer will engage with your company. The customer might choose to reach you at any time, by accessing one of the tens to hundreds of digital interactions you provide, the majority of which involve some form of content. Simply put, each and every digital content asset you produce is important and must be accessible by all customers.

## Web Accessibility Benefits Everyone's User Experience

The Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) describes web accessibility as “essential for some, useful for all,” with benefits for every user. The W3C established the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), which form the basis of much of the accessibility legislation around the world.

Adhering to the WCAG guidelines means ensuring an additional one billion people can find, navigate and access your content. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), as many as 15 percent of the world's 7.5 billion population have some kind of disability or impairment, which includes visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive, language, learning and neurological disabilities. That one billion or so people represent tremendous spending power that goes unrealized for companies which don't provide fully accessible digital content.



*"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure"*

Providing all users with open and equal access to your content is, in the words of UK bank and financial services company Barclays, not only "the right thing to do" but also "makes good commercial sense." Unfortunately, accessibility is all too often an area which companies overlook when thinking about digital content, or which they only address in hindsight rather than building accessibility in from the start.

As the old adage says, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." In other words, it's a lot cheaper to act now to resolve issues than deferring resolution to a later date when those issues may have significantly worsened, and require more resources to fix them. The concept of technical debt exists in the content world but it can be speedily and effectively resolved to avoid any negative consequences.

### **Implement DQM to Comply with Accessibility Standards**

By putting in place a digital governance tool, you can make sure your digital content is fully compliant with the W3C's WCAG standards. DQM gives you the ability to centrally manage all your digital content and to catch and fix errors before, during, or after content publication. DQM can even crawl your entire website (or multiple websites) and flag issues with content you published years ago.

DQM has baked-in checkpoints for accessibility, which map to the latest WCAG accessibility standards. By being able to identify all accessibility issues across their entire digital content portfolio, companies can prioritize what needs to be fixed and when.

Companies can also use DQM's website dashboards to monitor and track their progress to accessibility compliance and compare performance across different websites within their organization. Companies may additionally choose to benchmark their performance against that of other websites using DQM.

### **Inclusive Digital Experiences Limit Risks and Create Opportunities**

Fear of sizable fines and lengthy, potentially brand-damaging litigation may drive some companies to invest in DQM, particularly if they've already been the target of a web accessibility lawsuit. But fixing accessibility issues under a legally mandated deadline is both time-consuming and expensive.

Meanwhile, other companies recognize the opportunities afforded by becoming compliant with web accessibility standards. The WCAG guidelines enshrine best practices for building inclusive digital experiences for everyone, not only people with disabilities. That's because the recommendations improve readability across devices including older technologies, and they provide better support for lower bandwidth areas.

Every customer benefits from websites that make use of strong color contrast, offer clearly titled and well laid-out web pages, provide audio captions to videos, and enable website pinch-and-zoom functionality. Companies can use accessibility best practices to help inform content creation across their entire organization and include third parties, such as agencies.



## Don't Neglect Web Accessibility

It's time to stop treating web accessibility as an afterthought. Fixing lack of compliance with accessibility standards is costly not only to a company's bottom line, but can also negatively impact its reputation with customers.

By applying digital governance in the form of DQM, companies can get ahead of accessibility issues and provide digital content which is readily searchable, findable, navigable and consumable by all audiences. After all, your content should facilitate customer experiences, not obstruct them. ■

# Ensure Content Discoverability

The foundation for every successful online experience is discoverable digital content. The majority of today's digital interactions are initiated by people using search engines to find information on the products and services they are interested in purchasing. If customers cannot easily find your company and your products online, they may never engage with your business.

## Improve Your Search Visibility, Indexing and Ranking

Although digital marketers have shifted much of their attention to social media in recent years, achieving a high search ranking remains a critical contributor to a company's online success. A simple and low-cost way you can boost the discoverability of your web pages is to re-examine how well you deliver on the basic elements of effective on-page search engine optimization (SEO).

On-page SEO has been around for decades, yet companies are still missing out on its benefits in part due to a lack of basic knowledge among content authors and ineffective oversight by managers. At its core, on-page SEO is about removing any potential barriers to search engines finding, indexing and ranking your web pages. This means building pages that make it as easy as possible for search engines to analyze them and quickly determine each page's meaning.

A logical place to start is to examine your existing web pages to ensure each page has a clear purpose and function. As you go through this process, identify any broken links and make sure navigation is clear and intuitive, and includes text links.

### Think Like a Website Visitor

In its Webmaster Guidelines, Google's basic quality principles include some great advice for all companies: "Make pages primarily for users, not for search engines." This means that everything you do is human-readable — from a page's title to its header and sub-headline tags, its meta description tags and its URL.

The aim is to be clear, useful, accurate and specific. So spend time writing compelling meta descriptions, which appear below the title tag in search results. Think of meta descriptions for each of your web pages functioning as tiny ads for your company and your products. Although it doesn't directly impact search rankings, a well-written meta description can help significantly improve click-through rates. When well written, this is likely the phrasing users will see in search and a customer is more likely to click on a search result where the meta description both contains the keyword or keywords and clearly outlines what the content is about.

### Automate SEO Compliance with DQM

When dealing with multiple websites and hundreds or thousands of web pages, manually policing and enforcing SEO compliance can be a daunting, near-impossible task. By using digital governance software to automate SEO compliance, you can make sure all of your digital content adheres to a standard set of best practices.

“Make pages primarily for users, not for search engines.”

— Google

DQM helps companies ensure that content authors and publishers are following established SEO principles. When integrated with your web content management system, DQM makes it possible for your staff to centrally manage, flag and fix issues on existing web pages or when reviewing new pages prior to publication.

DQM includes standard checkpoints relating to SEO rules, including mandating that all pages contain headings, limiting the length of those headings, and flagging images that are too large. When thinking about customer experience, large images may be responsible for slow page load times which is another way you can lose your audience.

Some of the other standard checkpoints in DQM relate to both SEO and accessibility. For instance, stipulating that all PDFs include a meaningful title and that all images specify an “alt” attribute, a clear text alternative that describes the image accurately. DQM will flag pages where this information is missing. A company can also add custom checkpoints within DQM, based on the organization’s unique SEO strategy.

### Regularly Revisit Your Approach

It’s particularly important to refine and adapt your SEO strategy over time because Google is continually updating and refining its search algorithm. In recent years, this work has included adding more artificial intelligence and machine learning capabilities into the algorithm which has increased its sophistication.

For instance, Google’s search algorithm today has a much better understanding of keywords and of synonyms. This means that you no longer need to include multiple mentions of a particular keyword or use multiple keyword variants in your content. In fact, doing so can be

DQM helps companies ensure that content authors and publishers are following established SEO principles

counterproductive, given that Google is placing an increasing emphasis on websites that provide visitors with high-quality content, rather than fluff or keyword stuffing.

Quality matters, not quantity. Google interprets duplicate content or very similar information across web pages as poor quality content.

### Create EAT-able Content

Google's definition of high-quality content focuses on web pages demonstrating "expertise, authoritativeness and trustworthiness" or "EAT," according to the general guidelines Google provides to its human search quality evaluators. This translates to well-written and well-structured content with correct spelling and grammar.

Hundreds of factors influence how Google both automatically through its algorithm, and by its human evaluators, ranks your web pages. These factors also regularly shift in terms of how they're weighted. For instance, providing mobile-friendly web pages continues to increase in importance. Best practices here include optimizing images to reduce page loading speed, avoiding using fonts that are too small, or placing links too close together that make it hard for the user to access the one they want.

### Fix Errors, Avoid Duplication

In regularly crawling your web pages, DQM compares issues against a list of checkpoints and produces reports via dashboards on the errors it encounters from broken links, spelling mistakes and SEO violations, to other inconsistencies. DQM enables a company to quickly identify errors and fix them across multiple websites. For example, you can easily see where you might have exactly the same descriptions for titles or metadata, which, if uncorrected, could negatively impact your search ranking.





Organizations can use DQM to track their progress towards on-site SEO compliance and monitor improvements over time, as well as benchmark their scores against those of the broader DQM customer community. Larger organizations can also compare website scores across different regions or product lines.

DQM can alert you to errors which are not readily visible on your web page, but which can be seen in your source code. For instance, an editor may have deleted the visible text, but the underlying empty link remains in the source code. This can appear as spam-type behavior to Google and negatively impact your search rankings.

### **Make SEO Compliance Your Standard Practice**

DQM helps organizations document their best practices and then adopt a single standard approach to SEO which encompasses all of a company's relevant constituents. This means not only internal editorial and marketing staff but also includes external partners such as agencies. Using DQM ensures companies have one standard set of guidelines that everyone understands and observes, which is particularly important given the prevalence of outdated and misleading information about SEO.

With an effective on-page SEO strategy in place, you can rest assured that your content is fully discoverable and well-positioned to attract new customers and retain existing ones. ■

# Strengthen Brand Reputation & Customer Trust

Every time a customer engages with your company online, they expect each individual digital interaction to be a perfect or very similar match to their previous experience with your brand. Regardless of the digital touch point or the device they're using, your customers should always feel like they're dealing with the same organization. This consistency is what serves to establish customer trust and to build long-term brand loyalty in the digital age.

In order to provide consistently high-quality digital content, your company needs to comply with two sets of standards. First, there are the content standards you set internally relating to your own brands, products and the specific nomenclature your company uses. Then, there are the external standards, most notably the legal requirements and regulations which may be global or regional in nature, or industry-specific.

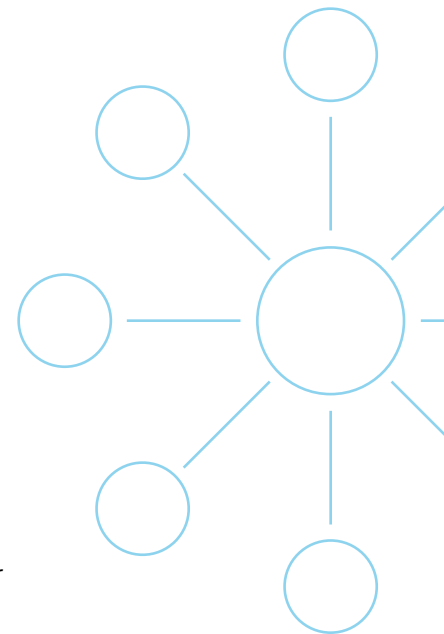
## **The Challenges of Content Compliance**

Ensuring digital content consistency and compliance is an ongoing challenge for many organizations whose primary means of enforcing quality and compliance is reliant on manual checks by already overtasked

employees. Your company may have hundreds or thousands of web pages across multiple websites around the world, which may be housed in a mix of product, divisional and regional sites as well as microsites.

Factor into this already complex mix how quickly an organization has to respond to and implement internal change. Such change can include propagating a new global branding initiative, the consolidation of acquired or merged companies, or divesting and retirement of products and brands.

Typically, there's no central control over all of a company's digital touch points. Instead, a company may have disparate groups or silos charged with creating and managing ever-increasing volumes of content. In some regions of the world, your company may rely on third parties like agencies or contractors to refresh and maintain your digital content.



### Automate and Centralize Compliance Checkpoints

With these widespread challenges, how can you make sure that everyone is adhering to and complying with internal and external standards so you can confidently provide a consistent digital experience to all of your customers?

This is where deploying an automated and centralized solution like digital governance software can help your organization achieve compliance and consistency. A company can use the standard set of checkpoints which come with DQM as well as create its own customizable checkpoints based on specific internal and external standards.

### Protect Your Brand

Let's look first at some examples of internal content standards. You can set up checkpoints to make sure all your pages and sites link to the correct legal notices and regional-appropriate contact details. You can also use

customized checkpoints to monitor any off-brand terminology that doesn't represent your organization's ethos.

Checkpoints can be tailored to mandate the display of up-to-date logos, tag lines, fonts and colors so that your products, brands and company are always clearly identifiable and recognizable to customers. Even a minor inconsistency can cause customers to doubt whether they are indeed dealing with the same company or brand, or perhaps worse, question its credibility, potentially resulting in lost sales.

A company can also use checkpoints to keep tabs on its use of language so that customers don't encounter unfamiliar words, phrases and acronyms. If you're in an industry like financial services or healthcare which has its own terminology, you might want to set up checkpoints to make sure your content authors are using terms that the average consumer understands.

### Meet Legal and Regulatory Requirements

Now, let's examine external standards. Making sure the content on your website complies with global, regional and industry legal and regulatory standards is particularly important for closely controlled industries such as financial services, government agencies, healthcare and life sciences. Across all such industries, new regulations are frequently introduced and existing ones are constantly being updated. These shifts in the regulatory landscape require companies to routinely revise their content to accurately reflect and adhere to changing standards.

The precise, correct and consistent use of language is key to ensuring all your digital content is in full compliance with external standards. For example, a pharmaceutical company may be required to include a certain legally approved phrase any time it's describing a particular drug or the

The precise, correct and consistent use of language is key to ensuring all your digital content is in full compliance with external standards

potential side effects of that medication. Using DQM, the organization can establish a checkpoint to ensure the mandated information is correct.

Penalties for non-compliance may be severe. They can range from fines to lawsuits and sometimes result in negative publicity which can damage a company's brand reputation. There's also the time and cost a company has to spend fixing any compliance breaches, or the digital content technical debt we discussed earlier. By using DQM, organizations reduce their risk of legal exposure from the start and avoid having to invest in any costly remediation work.

### Use DQM as Your Quality Control Platform

With DQM in place, your staff responsible for content compliance around the world gain access to the same centralized content monitoring and management system. The DQM dashboards report the number of errors across your websites and prioritize the order in which they should be rectified. Effectively, DQM becomes your company's content quality control platform and the foundation for content compliance best practices.

By working with your own employees and any external agency partners, you can institute regular content compliance checks against the standard and customized DQM checkpoints you've instituted. The fact that you may have differently structured teams and responsibilities across regions becomes less of a concern when everyone's operating in a single digital governance system.

The goal of digital governance is to create a content standards-based culture where everyone you work with understands the role content quality and compliance play in attracting and retaining customers, as well as the importance of avoiding any legal repercussions. Choosing to implement DQM on your flagship website for your initial DQM rollout can send a clear



message to your employees about the value your company places on quality, consistency and compliance.

With DQM, you can benchmark content performance across your product, regional and industry sites. So your flagship website can also act as a point of comparison for all your other digital properties. You can then recognize and reward content compliance leaders and those sites which have experienced the most improvement. You can also track continuous content compliance improvement over time and compare your company's progress with an aggregate of how the entire DQM client base is performing.

### Compliance + DQM = Consistency

If you think of your content creators and managers as a choir, you want them all singing in unison from the same sheet of music or, in this case, a single set of compliance standards. Using digital governance and DQM, you are able to automate the process of monitoring companywide adherence to your internal and external compliance best practices.

You should ensure that you protect and maximize the investment you've made and will continue to make in digital content by managing its quality and effectiveness. If your content contains inconsistencies and is non-compliant with your brand and with regulations, you are failing to realize the full ROI from your content.

Being in compliance means that, regardless of their location, device or touch point, your audience enjoys a high-quality, consistent digital experience every time, which in turn leads to increased customer conversion and retention rates, longer website visits and more cross-sell opportunities. ■

## TAKE THE NEXT STEP:

# Apply Content Quality Control Across Your Organization

A Message from Adrian Newby, Chief Technology Officer at Crownpeak

Over the course of my career, I've been fortunate to work on global digital content strategies and implementations in industries as varied as financial services, healthcare, and media and entertainment. It's amazing to observe the huge progress we've all made in the last decade or two. Now we can provide customers with sophisticated and personalized digital experiences. However, in the rush to generate vast amounts of digital content, many organizations have overlooked a critical area – governance.

Most companies recognize the need for formal digital quality control long before they realize that it's actually a formal discipline, supported by broad industry best practices and comprehensive software suites. Almost every organization I work with has some kind of internal, manual program in place. They are striving to preserve standards of brand integrity, meet regulatory guidelines such as accessibility, and implement best practices to try and boost search engine rankings. What they are struggling with is taking the next step, whether it's moving from a manual to an automated



ADRIAN NEWBY  
CTO, CROWNPEAK

program or standardizing on a single, global automated solution. Here are some recommendations on how to successfully navigate those transitions.

### Make a Strong Business Case

The first major hurdle any executive faces as they try to build internal support for a formal digital content governance program is how to make a compelling business case. Almost always, that executive relies principally on the specter of regulatory compliance and the potential risk to a brand's reputation and financial exposure inherent in compliance violations. However, asking your peers to get behind any kind of undefined, theoretical future risk is inevitably going to be an uphill battle.

My advice would be to focus on more immediate top-line benefits instead of hedging bottom-line risk. Good digital governance delivers faster, superior experiences because the quality and efficiency of the deployment is better. That, in turn, directly improves customer engagement and reduces abandonment rates. It's also very easy to instrument and show compelling before-and-after statistics in small governance pilots.

Improving the quality of your digital experiences, especially with respect to accessibility and web standards compliance, can also drive significant improvements in search engine rankings. Again, it's easy to take and then compare before-and-after measurements. You definitely shouldn't neglect or ignore compliance issues, but articulating the collateral top-line benefits will certainly make your business case a lot easier to sell internally.

### Choose the Right Leader

The next potential stumbling block for a formal digital content governance project is selecting the right role to spearhead and evangelize the initiative. That choice depends on your company's motivation for the program.

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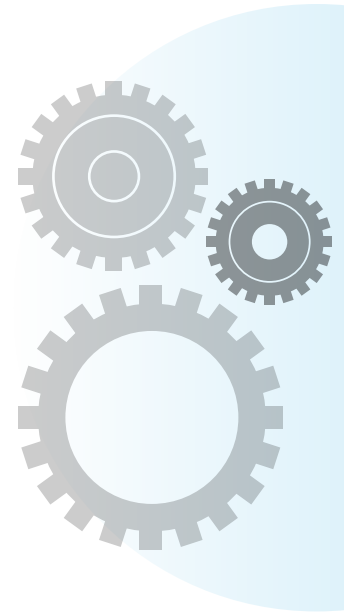
In an organization principally driven by compliance concerns, it can often be the case that quality is enforced via the office of the Chief Privacy Officer (CPO), or even general counsel, as a gated approval step prior to deployment. That can lead to very un-agile processes. I've also seen quality programs run by relatively junior web managers, often as an internal cost-of-doing-business exercise, absorbed within the overall marketing budget.

In my view, both of these approaches are more often counterproductive rather than effective. Digital content quality management, done right, can be a powerful force for awareness, engagement, conversion and retention, which makes it one of the most significant competitive weapons in the digital marketer's arsenal. Chief Digital Officers (CDOs) who recognize these potential benefits, and embrace a quality-first mentality, routinely drive their brands to high degrees of success.

### The Move from Manual to Automated

It's important to note that there is huge value to be salvaged from manual content governance practices during the transition to an automated software suite such as Digital Quality Management (DQM). Remember, the standards aren't changing. The automated process mainly aims to improve efficiency, consistency and frequency so preservation of those manual rule sets and using them as the basis for the automated platform configuration can be a huge time (and cost) saver.

Of course, one of the big value propositions of an automated platform is the ability to adopt and enforce complex industry and regulatory standards — for example, section 508, WCAG etc. — and there's nothing wrong with that. However, your company's manual standards are likely to be the best source of information for corporate brand identity, which is a critical aspect of any systematic digital quality management program.



## Rethink Existing Automation Endeavors

Other organizations may be some way down the digital governance automation path but failing to benefit from somewhat patchy implementations. Many large companies continue to invest (or not invest) in quality management programs on a divisional, business unit-by-business unit basis. The end result is often worse than doing nothing at all, with different standards and varying practices serving to exaggerate, rather than smooth and harmonize, corporate fault lines.

Companies relying heavily on digital agencies also fail in this regard, with often little or no enforcement of corporate quality standards at the agency's point of delivery. Again, the end result is a disjointed end user experience, telegraphing the fragmented nature of the organization and compromising the perception of a seamless, fully integrated customer experience.

## Best Practices in Implementation

As far as program implementation goes, there's a lot to be gained from executing a small pilot before going for the big conversion. Good digital governance is not solely about achieving some initial "big bang" fix. It's about institutionalizing the practice of continuous improvement, making sure that new content is delivered right the first time, and older content is properly curated as standards continually evolve. Figuring out those new processes, and ironing out the kinks in a controlled, small-scale environment, will yield a lot of valuable learning, which can then be applied to the organization as a whole.

## Best Practices in User Adoption

People feel good about doing good work. So, when implementing a digital quality program, I always encourage people to focus on rewarding

excellence, rather than penalizing under-delivery. Developing “quality dashboards” that provide easily consumable measures of quality at a point in time, incentivizing staff to drive those metrics higher, and sponsoring internal competitions between adjacent business units can all drive enthusiasm and engagement in healthy ways.

I’ve also seen companies apply quality standards to the work they receive from digital agencies in the form of defined acceptance criteria. If the work fails to meet a defined standard, it’s not accepted (and not paid for) until it’s fixed. This can also be a powerful argument with the C-suite, with obvious parallels to the just-in-time manufacturing industries, where supply chain efficiency is built around quality acceptance gates. Think of and position your digital governance project in the same way as a front-line discipline.

### Conclusion: Best Practices in Digital Governance

Digital quality management is no different than traditional quality management. The goals are the same whether you’re making cars, fabricating semiconductors or building awesome digital experiences. You’re trying to meet regulatory requirements, optimize product performance, create efficiently and delight your customers with consistency. You can’t achieve those objectives if you treat quality management as an afterthought. Implementing best practices and correcting mistakes early on in the content value chain improves outcomes for all.

Consider embedding your digital governance system directly into your content authoring process and providing your digital agencies with access to the same tools in their own workflows. Implement regular, automated scanning of deployed projects and incentivize remediation of identified



problems. Some companies have even leveraged the software development concept of the “bug bounty,” implemented leader boards and rewarded top “quality ninjas.” The possibilities are endless and creative approaches will deliver phenomenal results.

Being able to successfully apply quality control across all of your digital content ensures the largest group of potential online global customers can discover, access and engage with your content. Consistently delivering high-quality digital content is your path to winning new customers, expanding your presence with existing customers and thereby increasing revenue. ■

## ABOUT US



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Crownpeak provides the leading, enterprise-grade, cloud-first [Digital Experience Management \(DXM\)](#) platform. The Crownpeak DXM platform empowers Fortune 2000 companies to quickly and easily create, deploy and optimize customer experiences across global digital touchpoints at scale.

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