

Hasbro toys with global enterprise digital asset management system

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Mr. Potato Head is turning 60 this year and Hasbro has big plans for the iconic children's toy.

He's getting a makeover. He's grown some legs and has slimmed down a little in anticipation of a global rollout and reintroduction. But while children will still be able to rearrange his parts, Hasbro is reworking its enterprise digital asset management system to make sure the television ads, packaging, videos and other assets tied to the toy do not get mixed up as it is distributed around the world.

Hasbro, based in Pawtucket, R.I., is in the middle of reinventing its rich media and digital asset management strategy to make sure its toys and games are universally and easily identifiable to its marketers, distributors and retail partners across the globe. It's a key aspect of its overall enterprise content management (ECM) program.

As Hasbro moved from simply being a toy manufacturer to a "branded play company" encompassing numerous trademarks and entertainment formats such as film, it needed to expand, consolidate and integrate its digital asset management (DAM) system so the global company's disparate parts can more efficiently collaborate on various business processes.

Transforming a brand

The company began its reinvention in 2001, developing a brand portfolio. Today, Hasbro develops, promotes and distributes 150 active brands at any given time. There are also 1,500 brands stored in its vaults that are not in production

but might be revived in the future (think Stretch Armstrong).

All those brands are at the core of Hasbro's companywide turnaround strategy. Around those brands are all the ways it activates them, including the toys and games divisions, licensing and merchandising, digital media (seen a film about a toy lately?) and "immersive entertainment experiences" like online gaming.

"How do we secure our IP? How do we distribute to licensees and trusted partners?" asked Faith Robinson, Hasbro's director of ECM and DAM.

For a company that owns such brands as My Little Pony, G.I. Joe, Transformers, Tonka and the entire Milton Bradley game family, monitoring and distributing content and managing assets is a huge undertaking. Its partners include Lucasfilm, Sesame Street and others in television and film.

When Robinson joined the company last spring, she was handed the job of updating the legacy DAM product and expanding it to a global user community. As a result, the company is in the middle of a "mostly hardware" upgrade that will cost several million dollars. That investment includes more infrastructure, network capabilities, storage repositories, software and licenses and a new portal that will enable employees in different departments and who work for different brands to collaborate.

Expanding DAM

"OpenText [Media Management] serves as a core repository for us, and in that sense it works very, very well," Robinson said. The interaction between different departments, however, will have to be reworked, she said. "Each stakeholder



had their own versions of designs or animations. Everyone had their own silos."

There's a multitude of still images, packaging designs, audio files, video and film to create, edit, retouch, distribute and reuse, and the system needs to not only be the repository for the content, but the workflow as well, according to Robinson.

Now the effort is in the "unsexy stage of implementing all of our infrastructure," she said. Hasbro is using Livelink ECM from OpenText for workflow and document management matters. Additionally, a portal interface is in development that will integrate Livelink and the expanded DAM system. The homespun portal will enable each company business line to have its signature brand interface and appearance.

This move to combine or collapse storage volumes will save long-term infrastructure costs, and a planned upgrade to Open Text Media Management 7.0.5 is expected to simplify security issues and metadata management, support multiple languages and sophisticated version tracking and offer customizable search.

"Our creative people will be able to do a better job reusing assets, content, backgrounds and characters," Robinson said, adding that the marketing depart-

ment will be better positioned to respond to multiple stakeholders, many of whom are expected to be in previously untapped markets.

Targeting new markets

Hasbro expects that its revamped enterprise digital asset management strategy will not only smooth the development of toys, movies and television production in its traditional markets, but will help it break into places like India and South America.

“The new system needs to scale, and the only way to scale it is to design a process that fully supports that vision,” Robinson said.

But to make sure the vision succeeds and leads to future gains, Hasbro won’t simply throw a switch and sit back.

“We are putting in place a formal governance structure, with a few tiers. We’re putting in continuous training and business development programs,” Robinson said. The implementation has executive support, and an enterprisewide program is in place to teach employees how the system should be used. “We want to avoid having niche systems and silos continuing to populate.”

The whole point to properly managing all those rich assets is aimed, at least partially, at helping prevent any Hasbro employees from having to declare, “You sunk my battleship!”

DAM is a powerful tool that needs study

Any enterprise digital asset management (DAM) deployment needs careful study, said Hasbro’s Faith Robinson. She

noted that while any organization contemplating a DAM strategy should examine its needs carefully before determining how deeply it should dive into the technology, enterprises need to be aware of DAM’s wide range of possibilities.

“It’s a powerful tool and it can be manipulated into so many areas,” Robinson said. DAM can manage a company’s digital rights permissions, tie contracts back to project documents, create and store video resumes for the human resources department and more. “It’s so varied, it can enrich all aspects of the business, from legal to the creative team.”

But, she added, any successful ECM or DAM strategy is impossible without “having a real governance structure and real executive level support.”