



From chaos to calm

How to digitally transform your artwork management process



How to best track and manage your new product development

Product packaging plays an important role in consumer decisions. It's an important purchase driver and it communicates many things from your company's image and corporate values to product and safety information. It serves as a key marketing tool and drives brand recognition and market share while having a direct impact on competitive positioning. In industries from consumer-packaged goods and food and beverage to medical device and pharmaceuticals, the packaging is not only essential—it is often heavily regulated. As packaging artwork becomes more important to the product, delays in delivering accurate and approved package artwork have an increasing impact on time to market and a company's bottom line. This is why the artwork surrounding your product is just as valuable and important as your product itself and it requires a well-managed process.

However, incorporating artwork management into the product lifecycle can present a range of complex challenges – especially without efficient processes in place. The desire to consistently bring new products to market ahead of the competition, while managing emerging packaging and artwork design requirements, evolving regulatory compliance, the complexity of new packaging materials and the globalization of emerging brands, provide a range of potential disruptions to maintaining critical path for each project. And in today's vast global marketplace it's likely you may be managing hundreds of projects with variations for each simultaneously.

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Adding to this complexity, during their journey products will transcend multiple internal departments and stakeholders and interface with external resources including design shops, graphic houses and printers. With so many stakeholders it's important to tightly manage the process and the routing of materials for edits and approvals. Without an efficient process in place there is likely to be increased risk of error and potential bottlenecks in the process.



A host of challenges

It's clear that when it comes to Artwork Management there are a host of challenges. And, these challenges can result in delayed time to market, lost or misplaced content, excessive review cycles and in some cases mislabeled product. Additional challenges relate to issues with stakeholder collaboration, as well as with storing digital assets and lack of control and compliance for content. When these issues can't be met, you run the risk of increased time to market, regulatory fines and recall, loss of competitive position and damaged brand equity. Below are some of the primary challenges you might face when managing product packaging through your product lifecycle across your global enterprise.

Time to market

The cost of getting products to market has never been higher. Poorly organized review and approval processes and inefficient project management often cause significant delays in delivering packaging artwork that is required to go to market. Inefficient processes, poor stakeholder visibility and difficulty ensuring that mission-critical tasks are promptly addressed can make the artwork creation and approval process a source of risk rather than an enabler to improved time to market.



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Difficulty managing unstructured data and versions

When it comes to Artwork Management and managing new product lifecycles, there are many pieces of content involved in producing a final product. This can include images, legal and marketing pack copy, phrases, regulatory information, translations, barcodes, logos and more. Unfortunately, without an efficient workflow process and a central repository for managing important assets across a global enterprise, it's difficult to determine which version is the most current, and it becomes increasingly difficult to manage changes and provide access to final, approved content when you don't know who changed what and when.

Lack of effective collaboration

Packaging artwork needs to be circulated to many key stakeholders for approval throughout the product lifecycle. However, manual solutions which may even involve circulating artwork PDFs via email don't provide the type of collaborative platform needed for efficiently managing the process. Stakeholders are not able to simultaneously view, compare and annotate on digital media. That approach, along with disconnected software solutions, results in operational silos and doesn't encourage accountability.

Insufficient control and regulatory compliance

Managing control of content used in packaging artwork is critical to meeting deadlines, ensuring regulatory demands are met and enforcing brand consistency. Unfortunately, without an efficient, standardized process that enables users to leverage a source of truth and ensure consistent content and data, there is lack of control and the omnipresent risk of error and non-compliance.

Excessive artwork revisions

Reworks can be time consuming, costly and frustrating and ultimately cause delays in the artwork review and approval process. When jobs start without all the relevant information, delays and errors almost always ensue. Additionally, reactive and poor communication cause unnecessary revision cycles which both consume scarce resources and delay the readiness of packaging artwork.

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Poor visibility and metrics

Tracking a complex artwork process can be difficult especially when the process transcends across many facilities and regions globally. However, it's important to find the time necessary for collecting data because it has a direct effect on resource and capacity planning. Being able to track, report and measure performance can be challenging. However, it is critical to enable visibility throughout your entire end-to-end product lifecycle and to identify any bottlenecks, issues and process inefficiencies especially in highly regulated markets such as life sciences and food and beverage.

Difficulty integrating with partners

Without a standardized workflow process to manage packaging artwork, it can be exceedingly difficult to scale processes globally and locate consistent and approved content for new products. When relying on disjointed processes or working with a printer's Digital Front End (DFE) instead of your own configured workflow process, you lose ownership and control over your content. Each time you switch printers, this approach requires you to re-establish your process and deliver all relevant pieces of content.





Drowning in spreadsheets

To manage product artwork efficiently you need an automated artwork approval process that can be incorporated into your product lifecycle and managed across your global enterprise. However, there are still many companies today using antiquated manual processes for Artwork Management. Inconsistent data, limited access to a digital assets, poor visibility, reactive communications, and labor intensive and error prone processes mean that teams working in operational silos spend an inordinate amount of time creating and editing artwork. Then there's the chaos that ensues when trying to determine which version is the most accurate, what step is next and who is left to approve.

Traditionally many companies have used spreadsheets to manage their artwork and approval processes. This manual process which entails routing of printed documents through folders and emails presents a host of risks and inefficiencies. First and foremost, these documents can easily be lost, damaged (think of how a spilled cup of coffee might impact plans) or misplaced costing valuable time and energy. Then there's generally confusion around which document copy is most current. Without proper version it's not always clear if your spreadsheet has been routed to the right parties and it becomes increasingly difficult to manage changes and provide access to final, approved content.

Then there's Excel – although this path may offer a digital alternative, it still involves a range of inefficiencies. Data entry can be time consuming and error prone and these Excel docs are difficult to maneuver and maintain. Also, with Excel real-time comments and collaboration are out of the question and the ability to quickly analyze historical data is simply not possible.

Ultimately, using labor intensive and inefficient digital options, as well as unreliable and error-prone manual processes (including the use of spreadsheets and routing of physical folders) adds time and risk to your product lifecycle. This is especially true when there are multiple teams involved and individuals are not completing their tasks on time. Spreadsheets and trackers can be overly complex in size and result in too much time sourcing, chasing and trafficking. These spreadsheets often require a Project Manager to update a master spreadsheet regularly to ensure all changes have been captured.

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Also, getting reviews and approvals can be a considerable source of delays with new packaging especially when your Artwork Management process needs to be coordinated across a global enterprise. Therefore getting approval for a piece of artwork or packaging is not a process that should be left to email or the routing of physical proofs. Verbal approval isn't enough either, especially in regulated industries where it's critical to capture audit data. Manufacturers need to implement a process where everyone within a project can see if a specific piece of artwork is approved, useable and compliant with existing regulations.

What it boils down to is taking a manual approach to Artwork Management presents a wide range of pitfalls that ultimately result in constant revisions, unavoidable mistakes, missed deadlines, noncompliance and increased time to market.

Gambling on spreadsheets for such an important process can cost you, resulting in:

- Lots of unstructured data
- Limited version control
- Unreliable manual processes
- Lack of effective collaboration
- Lack of control & compliance
- Poor visibility and metrics
- Labor intensive & error prone processes
- No central repository
- Increased time to market





The digital transformation of artwork management

Nearly every business process across multiple industries has seen a massive transformation over recent years. Business environments have changed significantly while technical advancements impact business processes everywhere, offering competitive advantage for those that embrace this transformation. This is in part due to increased automation and the convergence of software applications which are required for enterprise-based operations that are expanding their brands and products globally.

This Digital Transformation is now addressing the failures linked to traditional ways of working. Siloed business operations, duplicate packaging and design processes, risks linked to market regulations, chaotic packaging and labeling approvals, product recalls, and too many meetings from idea to launch can take too much time and require urgent change. These inefficiencies are compounded by working with traditional project management tools such as Excel, MS-Project, Standalone artwork approval tools, and of course email.

In past, Artwork Management has been a long and cumbersome process with many moving parts that need to work like a well-oiled machine to deliver quality artwork consistently and on-time. Managing it has been particularly crucial as stakeholders to a poorly defined workflow can make creation, versioning and approval a needlessly long process.

Traditional project management applications often add more steps and more chaos to your existing day to day 'way of working.' Applications such as PLM systems, new product development, new packaging design, and collaboration platforms, are not purpose built to directly manage the packaging artwork process. A comprehensive and configurable Artwork Management Solution will provide complete visibility and enable you to specifically define roles and responsibilities, making clear who is to review what, using what criteria, by when. It also will manage workflow and proofing across both internal teams and outside agencies while enabling current status to be viewed and approvals submitted remotely on a global scale.

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As time goes by, a comprehensive, modern Artwork Management Solution allows you to build up a knowledge base of commonly made mistakes, repeated bottlenecks, and areas that need extra resources for improved KPIs. It also enables you to eliminate duplication of efforts and store final approved versions of brand elements, package information, legal and regulatory requirements in a central repository for easy access. Companies no longer have to worry about where artwork such as logos, fonts, stock photos, and other assets unique to your organization are stored. These solutions will drive real efficiency and make the difference in getting your products to market faster, smarter and more cost effectively than your competitors.

Businesses must focus on leveraging today's Digital Transformation to gain competitive advantage. Solutions, including those for Artwork Management and new product development, that can be configured fit to your organizations existing processes are now available at an enterprise level. It's no longer something to consider, but a question of when to invest, or run the risk of falling behind your competitors.





The value of cloud based solutions

Businesses of all sizes, industries, and geographies have made the switch to cloud based deployments and services. The advantages of adopting this model along with Software as a Service (SaaS), Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) or Platform as a Service (PaaS) are many. With a managed services model the need for you to acquire, configure, upgrade, and maintain hardware and software is removed. There are no servers, no installation, no infrastructure required. This ultimately improves productivity, increases focus on your business instead of infrastructure, provides predictable and steady stream of costs that can be factored into any financial model and reduces implementation times.

It has become increasingly important that organizations consider these cloud-based deployments to keep pace with market forces. New global packaging, marketing trends, growing competition and an everincreasing flow of information is forcing organizations to move and react faster. This is why implementing this model for your Artwork Management and end-to-end product lifecycle systems, is proving to offer significant value.

No matter the size of your company or the size of the product and packaging range, packaging artwork workflow management solutions and real time collaboration solutions are now available in the cloud. And, when using managed services for these deployments you can streamline processes, increase efficiencies, improve security, create a more predictable cash flow and offer the ultimate in flexibility.

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By trusting a third party to handle cloud deployments, data centers and security, companies can focus their time and resources on their core business.

Some of the advantages of maintaining your artwork management in the cloud:

- **Collaborate in context** - Stop losing work in unnecessary emails or chat and eliminate expensive and time-consuming meetings.
- **Real time updates** - Use dedicated dashboards that gives you access to immediate status updates, graphs and real-time comments from other users and supply chain partners.
- **Streamline workflow** - Align with your business partner's approval processes and track progress and contributions from your team members including subtask visibility and set deadlines.
- **Suppliers create projects quickly** - Simplify job management by organizing everything you need to complete your project in a single cloud-based dashboard.
- **Prioritize work across multiple supply partners** - Define which projects and tasks subtasks matter most to ensure that suppliers accomplish the right projects at the right time.
- **Secure data and backup** – Access secure data which is backed up across a world-class data center infrastructure.





From chaos to calm

When you use a platform that offers a configurable, automated solution for your packaging artwork and end-to-end business processes, you're able to mitigate risk, reduce complexity, and ensure traceability and regulatory compliance. With the right Artwork Management Solution in place you can have true collaboration, unmatched visibility and the flexibility to improve time to market and scale with your business. Here's what that looks like:

Streamline your packaging artwork process

Companies in a wide array of industries including pharmaceuticals, medical device, retail, consumer products and others are under increasing pressure to manage the packaging artwork processes more efficiently and in less time. Leading companies need a powerful, user-friendly, cloud-based platform that streamlines the packaging lifecycle process. At the same time, companies in regulated environments also need to track printed artwork and packaging material from change request through the approval process ensuring compliance and auditability.

Manage workflows proactively

Instantly see the status of each project and task within the project or workflow. Digital workflows streamline projects and enable task control for cross-functional teams responsible for new product development, product lifecycle management and artwork approval activities. Speed the artwork process at every critical step, from initial project creation through to final approvals. Track and manage projects and data with flexible and easy-to-use workflows.

Plan and manage packaging artwork more effectively

Staying on top of everything during the entire lifecycle of a project is challenging. Artwork Management Solutions help drive continuous improvement and control projects while anticipating typical challenges and delays. Evaluate projects according to complexity, risk, profitability and current goals. Gain real-time access on project status for product managers, marketing teams, legal, compliance, brand managers and new business teams.



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Manage and approve from many sources

Manage and approve content from multiple sources, ensuring the correct copy and images are used for packaging-related artwork and marketing literature. Artwork Management should be highly configurable and allow you to replicate your way of working, providing easier and more efficient project management for complex processes. Artwork Management should also improve coordination with internal and external suppliers resulting in fewer errors and delays when localizing for different markets across a global landscape.

View and proof high-resolution artwork

Gain instant collaboration with your approval community with comprehensive version control over all artworks. Artwork Management should enable high-resolution graphic artwork, labeling, web and video content to be viewed at the same resolution in real time, regardless of connection speed. Record all changes, annotations and approval/ rejection decisions by user, task and date/ timestamp. You should get a full audit history of annotations, approvals and rejections for extensive KPI analysis. Where artworks have multiple revisions, you need the ability to automatically compare versions and highlight the differences.

Manage digital assets centrally

Eliminate the need to search internally and externally for data, artworks and assets. Ensure all approved versions of artwork and supporting documentation (product information, cutter guides and imagery) are stored, managed and accessed easily through one central digital asset manager. You can store any file type and attach to projects to ensure that the correct data and assets are used throughout the process. Artwork Management should record all version history so you can see who changed what and when.

Simplify global translation management

Reduce or even eliminate costs associated with pack copy text translation. Create a library of common phrases, in any language, for multi-lingual copy requirements. Leverage workflow between internal and external stakeholders involved in the translation process while ensuring that only the latest, approved phrases are used in pack copy.



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Enable regulatory compliance

Keep pace with ever-changing regulations with a complete audit trail of all projects. Artwork Management should automatically keep a permanent record of the entire process including all approval points, status, dates and users associated with any critical path. Users can monitor performance and streamline processes across internal departments, supply chain partners and customers.

Deploy quickly with total user adoption

Eliminate the need for long and costly implementations by leveraging a unique business user configuration. Ensure all users embrace the Artwork Management Solution with an easy to use and understand interface. One simple workspace makes it easy for users or partners to complete tasks without having to navigate multiple screens and windows. Centralized project information means less confusion and greater efficiency while reducing errors.

Gain insight on your artwork processes

Avoid hours of compiling data with upto- the-minute dashboards and analysis on all activity as it moves through the system. Improve cost and time efficiencies with instant visibility of the status of campaigns, plus you can drill down for detail on each stage of the critical path. Track KPIs to plan resources across a campaign or project, removing bottlenecks and allocating accordingly for peaks and troughs of expected or even unexpected activity.

Backup and security for peace of mind

Today's Artwork Management should be delivered as a SaaS (Software as a Service) – so you only need regular internet access to start realizing its benefits. There are no servers to install, no installation, no IT infrastructure required. The provider takes care of all the infrastructure, and you can be safe in the knowledge that all the data is held securely and backed up across a world-class data center infrastructure.

Optimizing for success

Ultimately, product packaging plays a critical role in adoption and sales of your products and its influence on consumers buying decisions and brand recognition cannot be minimized. However, managing this highly regulated element of your new product lifecycle can pose many challenges, which can directly impact time to market and a company's bottom line. This is why it's critical to have a well-managed Artwork Management process in place.

By avoiding manual, error prone processes and inefficient Excel options and opting for cloud-based deployments with managed services, you can realize realtime collaboration and visibility while focusing your time and resources on your core business. A comprehensive Artwork Management Solution streamlines packaging design and workflow by bringing accountability and structure to the process. By connecting users, departments, geographic silos and business partners across your global enterprise you can unlock massive benefits with an overall reduction in administration and elimination of duplication effort and errors.

Software's configurable and automated [Smartflow solution](#) enables you to easily manage packaging artwork and the end-to-end business processes with complete access and full transparency. Smartflow transforms project management, streamlining the packaging concept to shelf process, enabling you to lower costs, improve control and regulatory compliance, significantly decrease complexity and reduce time to market.





The world's largest cloud-based **Enterprise Labeling**
and **Artwork Management** provider



Report

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