How to Transform Your Product Development with a Document Management System

April 20, 2022

Product development, in any industry, is a flexible process that needs to be customized to your business and product. Not every product development is going to look like another, some may have different industry standards that they have to follow. Overall though, [any type of product development](#) can have opportunities for improvement, and especially as your business grows, you'll want to have a process that is scalable. When it comes to document management within product development, if you don't have a system that can control, move, and streamline those necessary documents, files and images, you can run into many issues like overall delay of development, human error, lost information, and more.

From beginning to end, the product development process is not one that takes a couple of days. Some products may take weeks, months, or even years to fully develop. During that time you may have multiple ideas that go through revisions and multiple collaborators until it is finally fully developed. A Document Management System (DMS) gives you the tools and abilities you need to give your product development that governance and control that you are unable to do by hand. Throughout this blog we will explain how a DMS and the features it can provide will transform your product development.

Document Capture and Storage

There are many steps within product development; each step has its own necessary documents, schematics, photos, and more. One of the first steps in any development of a product is to research and develop your ideas. Especially during the early stages of product development there are a lot of ideas moving around. It can be an overall collaborative part of product development and without a system that can capture, track, and move those documents you can run into missing documents, duplication, and even development delays.

During these more collaborative stages like research and idea development you want to be able to capture any and all information. Not only text documents either – you may have different types of files like a pdf of research information or png images; you will need a system that can handle all different types of files.

For example, there may be a creative design sheet that was updated multiple times within the early stages of development but now that your team is in the prototyping stage, you need to retrieve it. Without a solid system in place, it could take hours to track down that sheet if your team has to dig through dozens of loose papers of drafts and other documents. A DMS gives you the capability to capture these documents at the very beginning of their lifecycle and store them all in one centralized location. You can easily index and search through all file types that come through product development, making retrieval and storage a painless and fully digitized process. Making it seamless for your employees to find the documents they need while also eliminating the extra time it takes to track down documents is a key to increased efficiency for your product development team.

Document Control

Storing your documents is only half the battle when it comes to product development. In order for a system to actually transform your product development process, you will need more than just a place to store your documents. One of the biggest issues with product development is the many different versions of certain documents. Finding documents is one thing, but how do you know it is the most up-to-date version of that document? During all phases of product development there are constant changes and adaptations to designs, research, strategy, and more. In order to get the entire picture of your product you want to ensure that the version of your document is the right one. For example, you may need the final product design from the creative team. If there is no way to identify if the designs they are

giving you are the latest version, that can put a major hold on product production.

A well rounded DMS will have automatic revision control that captures each document revision with a full audit trail. That way you now have the visibility of revisions that were made, who made them, and what content is most up-to-date so that your team can stay on the right track. A DMS also has the feature of only allowing certain users to edit documents at a time. As we said earlier during the beginning stages of the product development, collaboration is necessary. On the other hand, there are steps within your process that you don't want multiple people editing. With a DMS you can also check documents in and out to be sure drawings and designs are only being changed by one person at a time, but can be viewed by everyone at any time.

Product Design Workflows

Workflows are what really makes the difference between using a DMS for your product development and sticking to a manual process. Delays in product development can be a big issue for your company. When product designs and research files are floating around your offices, it is hard to make sure each document gets to the right person without running into the issues of human error. A product design needs to go through multiple approvals before it is finalized for roll out. In order to ensure that these specific steps of approval are taken before the designs move forward, you need a system that has the capabilities to do this. A DMS equipped with workflow has for specific product designs or document life cycles that streamline processes and improve productivity throughout the entire organization.

Get Started Today!

With the right DMS you can take your manual product development processes and transform it to not only help get your products out faster but save your company time and money. Here at Optix we have helped multiple organizations transform their product development processes. We have the tools, people, and system to help you too! Contact us today to learn more about Optix and how it can help transform your product development.