Pharma marketing guide

# MODULAR CONTENT: MEANING, STRATEGY, AND BEST PRACTICES

What you will learn

What is modular content? How is it different from the traditional content supply chain? What benefits does It bring? This guide describes what modular content means, the advantages that it provides, and then goes further — explaining how to implement it in your organisation and offering practical advice for a smooth process. So, if you're thinking of switching to modular content, start here. And do **get in touch** to learn about our work.

Sections

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WHAT'S THE MEANING OF MODULAR CONTENT?
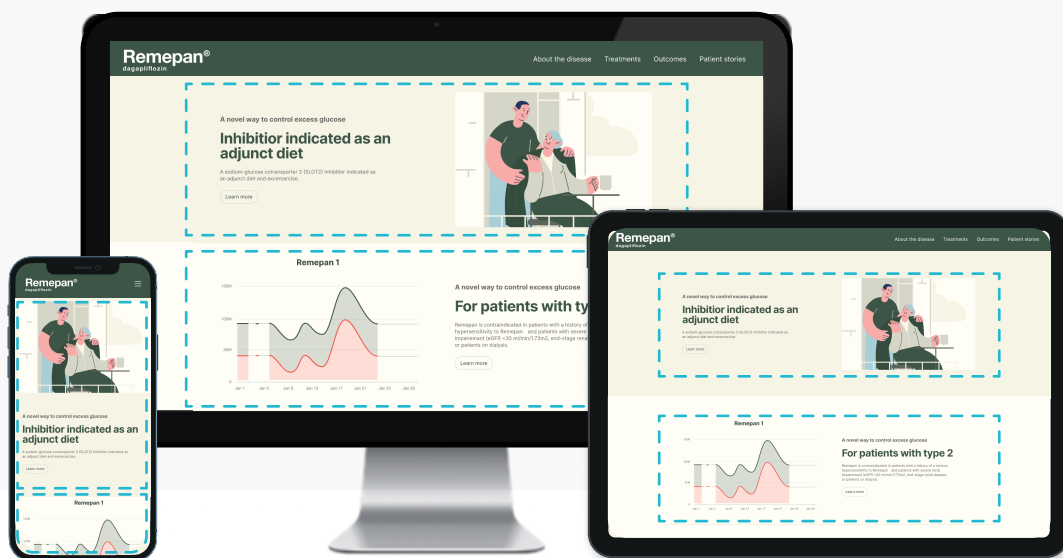
Pre-approved content 'modules' enable you to create marketing assets quickly

Modular content is a new kind of content, occupying a 'middle position' between individual 'components' like texts and graphics and completed assets such as an eDetailer. Specifically, modular content means pre-approved blocks of content — 'modules' — that are used to create marketing assets. Each module includes everything needed to tell a complete story, e.g. product claims, references, copy, graphics, and logos. And it will have business rules assigned to specify how to use it. The result is a form of content that can work both in a standalone way to deliver one specific message and in combination with other content modules to tell a bigger story.

The ability to assemble modules in different combinations is why modular content is often compared to Lego bricks: a few blocks provide endless creative possibilities. Equally important is the fact that you can apply modular content across channels. You can use the same module in **approved email**, **eDetailing**, social media, **remote detailing** and **self-service systems**. Modular content, therefore, provides you with the freedom to combine content blocks to build assets for use in multiple channels.

From a marketing perspective, modular content enables faster asset creation because production is easier and more efficient. For colleagues in Medical, Legal and Regulatory (MLR), modular content simplifies content approvals. Instead of approving each asset, they can approve content modules that are used multiple times — knowing that it delivers exactly the same message, in the same way, no matter where it is used. If claim updates are required later, these can be applied at the module level, rather than requiring the recreation and re-approval of the whole asset.

Website

eDetailer

Content module

Email
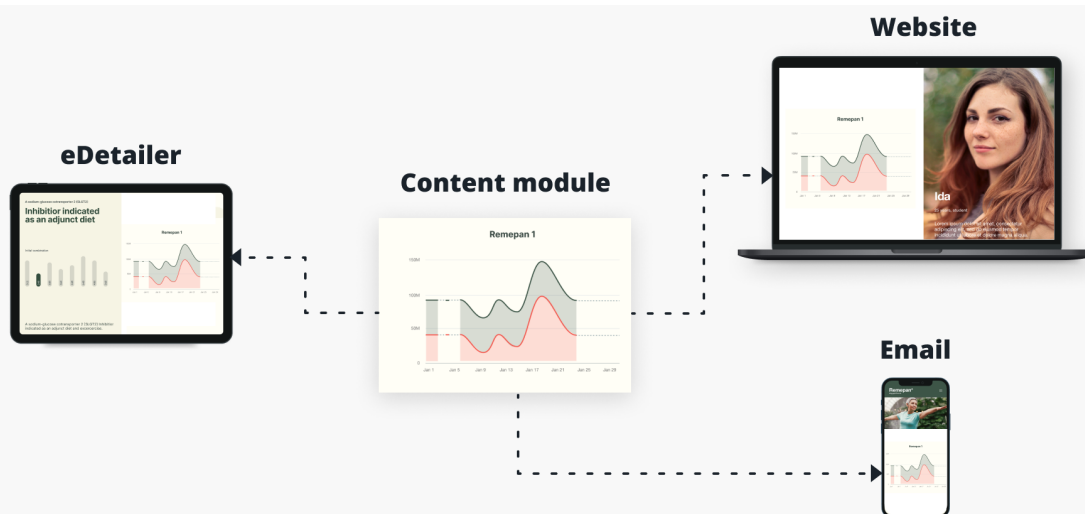
The same content module can be applied to multiple assets and channels

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WHY MODULAR CONTENT IS NEEDED

Growing content demands: A good way to understand the need for modular content is to contrast it with the previous system. Traditionally, brand teams decided which channels to use, defined the content, and created a master that affiliates would localise and adapt. Then, they repeated the process every time a new asset was required: one at a time, again and again, moving through the same lengthy process.

The traditional supply chain was fine when all that was required was an eDetailing presentation and a brand website. While the process was never quick, it functioned. Slowly this changed as the pharma marketer's toolbox expanded. Now, in addition to eDetailers and brand websites, companies have invested in rep-triggered approved email, remote eDetailing, and **digital brand assistants** in self-service solutions. And more channels are coming online all the time.

HCP preferences: There are also demands from HCPs for more relevant and personalised content. And pharma is responding. For example, general marketing emails are being replaced by more targeted communications that match specific customer profiles. And increasingly, approved email systems are being introduced that enable reps and MSLs to use their understanding of individual customer needs to build communications themselves.

Personalised communications: Rather than one message for all in just a couple of channels, the desire now is multiple messages matched to different profiles delivered through multiple channels. This is a positive development, resulting in a far better customer experience. But it presents a problem: how can all this content get produced, approved and localised?

Stretched supply chain: As pharma has discovered, it can't achieve its ambitions using the traditional content supply chain. Firstly, there are cost limitations. Budgets are not growing to match the demand for content. Secondly, the system simply cannot cope with the volume. Producing channel-specific materials that MLR teams must repeatedly review — even though they contain identical messaging — is highly inefficient.

Faster time-to-market: A long planning process, followed by inefficient content development and painstaking review cycles, doesn't meet the demands of today's marketing organisations. A slow process means that content takes too long to reach HCPs. This also prevents marketers from quickly responding to data. Market insights are being learned but materials cannot be easily updated in response.

Innovation: Lack of content also inhibits companies' abilities to implement **personalised customer journeys** and other forms of modern digital marketing. Instead of the right message for the right person, the current system encourages one message for all. While companies are keen to trial new approaches, any pilot project always hits the realities of the traditional content supply chain.

A more efficient way of working is needed that increases content volume and speed-to-market, while meeting the requirements of regulatory review, yet not resulting in exponential budget increases. Modular content provides this efficiency.

"**Pharma has reached the limits of what's possible with the traditional content supply chain. Further improvements to customer experience now require a more efficient way of working.**"
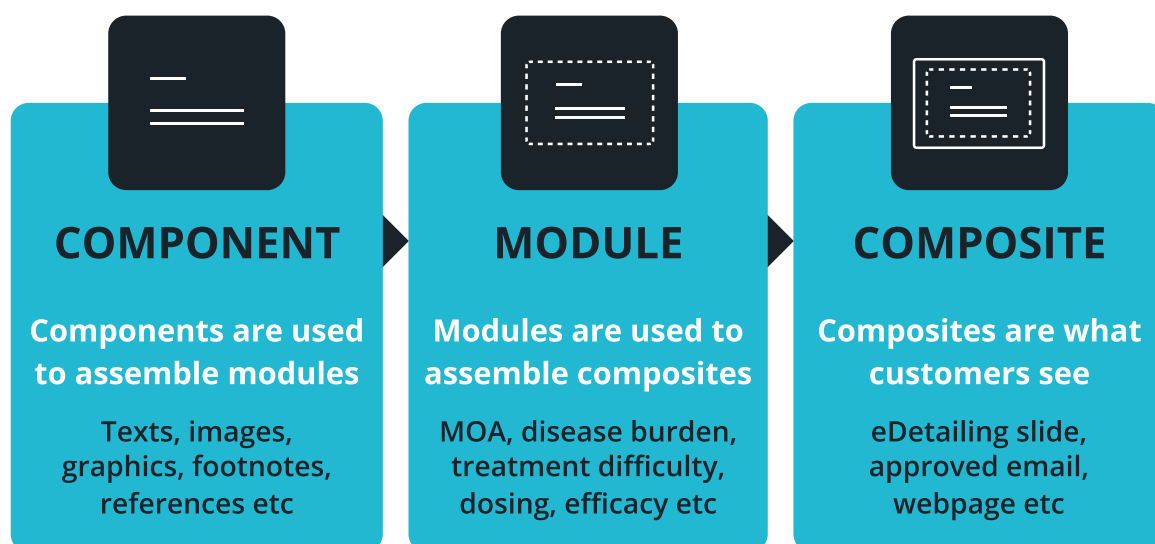
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🔖 HOW MODULAR CONTENT WORKS

To understand how modular content works, it is useful to know how it is built and where it fits in the content process. Three layers need to be defined: components, modules, and composites.

✓ **Component:** Components are individual content elements in their smallest reusable form. Text snippets, disclaimers, graphics, short-form videos, and individual product shots are all components. In the traditional content supply chain, these were used to build each individual asset.

✓ **Module:** Modular content combines components to tell one complete mini-story. For example, one module might include components required to explain a product's mode-of-action, including a headline, texts, images and a short video. Importantly, it also includes all required referencing. This enables the module to work independently — you can place it anywhere, combine it with other modules, and use it across channels.

✓ **Composite:** A composite is the finished asset that HCPs will see. For example, a composite could be an approved email or an eDetailing slide. Again, everyone will be completely familiar with composites from the traditional content creation process.

As should be clear, the innovation is to combine components into modules. Instead of assembling components each time to build marketing materials, marketers can shortcut the process by working with pre-assembled modules. This is the critical step, providing the efficiency required to speed up marketing production. It is possible because each module tells a complete properly-referenced mini-story — making modular content easy for MLR. Once MLR have approved a module, it doesn't need further reviews each time it appears.

COMPONENT

Components are used to assemble modules

Texts, images, graphics, footnotes, references etc

MODULE

Modules are used to assemble composites

MOA, disease burden, treatment difficulty, dosing, efficacy etc

COMPOSITE

Composites are what customers see

eDetailing slide, approved email, webpage etc

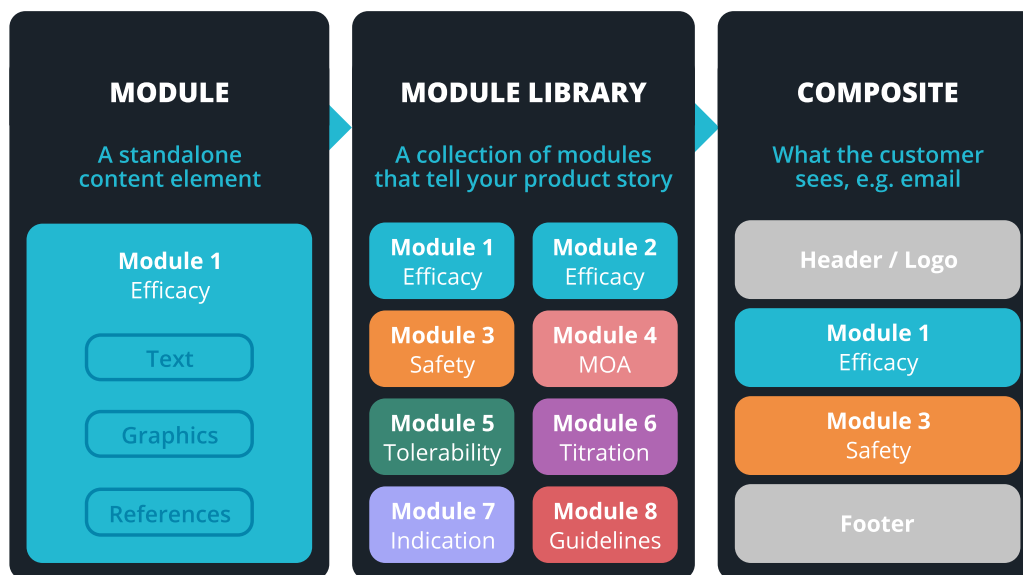*Modular content organises multiple components into one fully-referenced mini-story*

🔖 THE PRACTICAL USE OF MODULAR CONTENT

In practice, modular content is easier to use and far quicker to implement than the traditional supply chain. One immediate benefit is that a modular approach provides much-needed clarity. By definition, there are fewer content modules than there are components. Knowing that you have a hundred product images is less useful than knowing that you have three modules that explain your product's mode of action. When organised in a library, modular content is easy to overview and locate.

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For customer-focused colleagues, modular content makes it easy to rapidly build assets. They can see what is available in the modular content library. They can be confident that it has been reviewed by MLR and is fully referenced. They know that each module is formatted to express the brand identity correctly. And they can quickly combine modules to generate materials to drive campaigns or meet specific customer needs.

For example, creating a marketing email with modular content gives you a significant head start over someone working with the traditional content supply chain. If you are using a content management system like **Activator**, you can see all available modules and insert them directly in the email as you build it. And, because modular content is pre-approved, MLR reviews are far shorter too. Only new content requires review and — since the vital content will likely already be 'modularised' — these light reviews of the finished asset will be fast.

MODULE

A standalone content element

Module 1
Efficacy

Text

Graphics

References

MODULE LIBRARY

A collection of modules that tell your product story

Module 1 Efficacy	**Module 2** Efficacy
Module 3 Safety	**Module 4** MOA
Module 5 Tolerability	**Module 6** Titration
Module 7 Indication	**Module 8** Guidelines

COMPOSITE

What the customer sees, e.g. email

Header / Logo

Module 1
Efficacy

Module 3
Safety

Footer

Choose from your modular content library to quickly build marketing assets

🔖 BENEFITS OF MODULAR CONTENT IN PHARMA

The efficiency of modular content doesn't just mean reduced costs. For forward-thinking pharma companies, it provides the opportunity to overcome the constraints of the old system. Previously, advanced digital marketing strategies were not attempted. Or, if they were proposed, they quickly met the realities of the traditional content supply chain. By removing these limitations, modular content enables marketing teams to work in new ways and realise long-held ambitions.

✓ **Speed:** Working with modular content significantly reduces the time to bring the new assets to market. Because content is faster to create, your content supply chain is more efficient, and you can achieve more with the same resources.

✓ **Easier MLR:** Modular content removes the duplication of MLR work. Rather than repeatedly reviewing individual assets with the same messages, MLR can approve content modules once and focus their attention just where it is needed.

✓ **More content:** A primary benefit of modular content is simply the increased amount of marketing content that becomes available. This opens new opportunities for different kinds of engagement that were impossible before.

✓ **Omnichannel:** A modular approach enables omnichannel strategies. Because modules can be quickly assembled in different configurations, you can build personalised customer journeys that tell your product story engagingly across channels.

✓ **Higher quality content:** Highly-skilled designers and writers are freed from just producing the most basic things because that was all that was possible. The efficiency of a modular approach enables creatives to produce their best work.

✓ **Empowering content creation:** With modular content, brand, marketing, and sales teams no longer have to go to a designer for everything. The simplicity of the approach means that they can quickly assemble quality content themselves.

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✓ **Relevancy:** With more content created in the same amount of time, better targeting becomes possible. The efficiencies of modular content mean that you can match content to specific profiles and respond to HCP calls for more personalised communication.

✓ **Content reuse:** Great content ideas were previously under-exploited because repurposing them across channels was too difficult. A modular approach changes this, enabling affiliates to share quality content with each other.

✓ **Refreshed content:** Due to the slow creation process and the complications of MLR, assets become dated. But by updating individual modules rather than whole assets, content can be continually refreshed in a form that's easily implemented by affiliates.

✓ **Innovation:** Modular content allows you to release materials quickly, see what is (and isn't) working, and then update individual modules accordingly. Continual **small improvements rapidly add up** — driving innovation and experimentation.

✓ **Brand consistency:** Because modular content is prepared in advance, it is easier to achieve a consistent global impression. Marketing and sales teams now focus on selecting modules that are already in perfect brand alignment.

✓ **Reduced risk:** Because core claims are built into the modules (see below: **Modular content processes**), it is easier to maintain strict compliance. This rigorous content governance reduces risk, helps ensure patient safety, and provides peace of mind.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT MODULAR CONTENT

Modular content makes the whole pharma content supply chain work more efficiently. As such, it impacts not only marketing, sales and agency partners but also MLR, procurement, and other parts of the organisation. Because it necessarily will affect people's workflows, you need to involve and engage them in a change management process.

Before 'turning on' modular content, a detailed internal rollout plan is required. At Anthill, we recommend a structured process that builds support — and clarifies roles and processes — before modularising your content and implementing the technology that makes it available. Key steps for implementing modular content:

• Establish a core team to set the vision and strategy
• Motivate internal stakeholders and key markets
• Detail the new processes and workflows
• Build a core claims library
• Modularise existing assets and set business rules
• Build a global modular content library
• Localise content and establish local modular content libraries

AN INCENTIVE TO CHANGE
Motivate stakeholders

- Identify impacted stakeholders
- Articulate a motivation for each
- Engage to convey the motivation
- Involve larger markets from the start

1

CLARIFY THE PROCESSES
Define required processes

- Document modular content creation processes
- Document localisation processes
- Involve MLR to adjust approval workflows
- Document briefing and assembly processes

2

BUILD THE CONTENT
Modularise your assets

- Select a brand and gather relevant content
- Divide content into modules
- Assign metadata, business rules
- Develop a communication book with all available modules
- Approve and localise

3

ENABLE VIA TECHNOLOGY
Make content available

- Create modules in Veeva
- Upload components of the module
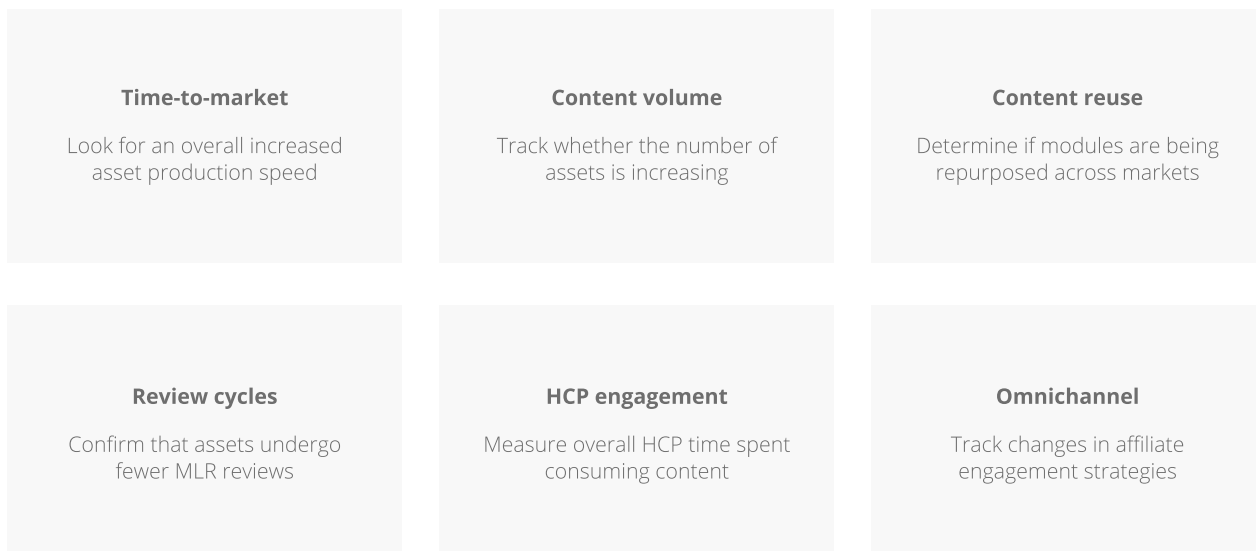- Assign business rules
- Attach metadata

4

Modular content rollout plan example

VISION, GOALS AND METRICS

A core team, with the proper representation from different departments, can drive adoption in your organisation — providing both a guiding vision and detailed processes. Clearly defined goals for modular content are essential. Key performance indicators (KPIs) should be established early on. These metrics will likely include internal factors such as reduced time-to-market of assets, shortened approval time, fewer review cycles, increased volume of content, and greater content reuse. More customer-centric metrics may include increased HCP time spent consuming

content, the implementation of omnichannel engagement and the creation of more relevant customer journeys.

The vision should also clarify precisely what is meant by modular content. There may be multiple interpretations in your organisation. Sometimes, the term is confused with 'variable content'. And it may also get mixed up with 'templates'. Misunderstandings slow the process, so aligning people around a common definition is essential.

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Time-to-market Look for an overall increased asset production speed	**Content volume** Track whether the number of assets is increasing	**Content reuse** Determine if modules are being repurposed across markets
Review cycles Confirm that assets undergo fewer MLR reviews	**HCP engagement** Measure overall HCP time spent consuming content	**Omnichannel** Track changes in affiliate engagement strategies

Modular content KPI examples

🔖 STAKEHOLDER BUY-IN

Marketing content impacts a wide range of stakeholders inside and outside the company. Therefore, the biggest challenge with modular content is not the content strategy or the technology but the change management required. Building support, generating understanding of the modular content's value, and inspiring people to embrace the concept is essential.

The first step will likely be mapping the affected stakeholders in your organisation. Once identified, it is a good idea to articulate a motivation for change for each group. People need to understand the advantages that modular content brings to the broader organisation and themselves. Individuals only see part of the content supply chain and

therefore may benefit from gaining an awareness of the bigger picture — how content is used 'upstream' and 'downstream' from them. But they should also understand that while modular content will change their workstreams – it should! – they will benefit from this.

For example, MLR can avoid the duplication of work by approving modular content once rather than repeatedly re-approving the same content in different channels and assets. For commercial operations, faster approvals result in speedier time-to-market assets and opportunities for increased content relevance and personalisation. And for skilled creatives, the motivation may be realising their ambitions for more advanced forms of storytelling and engagement.

Practical actions to drive a change management process:

• **A white paper describing the vision and goals for modular content**

• **A video series explaining the modular content concept**

• **Examples of content that has been modularised**

• **Workshops to involve MLR colleagues in the process**

• **Training sessions for global brand teams**
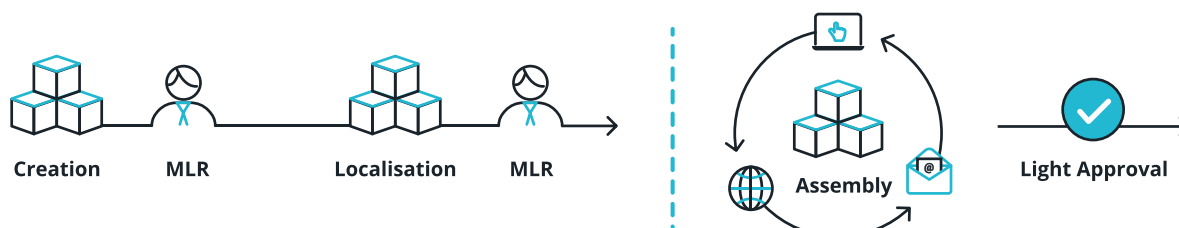
Pharma modular content process example

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MODULAR CONTENT PROCESSES AND WORKFLOWS

Modular content enables you to redefine the content supply chain. Traditionally, content is created and approved and then localised and locally approved. And that process is repeated each time an asset is required. By contrast, modular content avoids repeating the entire process by creating modules that only require light approval.

Once set up, things go a lot faster. But new processes need to be put in place. And people must be fully aware of what is changing, why it is essential, and precisely what the new procedures will be. The following describes the innovations that modular content brings to the content supply chain.

Core claims: Modular content requires switching from defining content for specific assets to creating modules that can be used anywhere. Each module will need to tell a complete 'mini-story', e.g. explaining a product's mode of action. And therefore — to be able to stand alone in this way — each module must be fully-referenced. If you are a Veeva user, this is made efficient by the ability to build a core claims library, which contains pre-approved statements, substantiated by references, that are stored in Vault PromoMats. Claims are essential for modular content, so building a claims library first is highly recommended.

Business rules: In collaboration with MLR, brand teams need to define the 'business rules'. These are the instructions for the correct use of each module. The most common modular content business rule determines how a module can be combined with other modules. For example, when claiming a certain level of efficacy, it may be necessary to describe the safety profile. Therefore, the business rule would state that the efficacy module should always be used together with a product safety module. Other kinds of business rules include directions on headline or image placement, links to guidelines, or uses in specific channels.

Templates: It may also be helpful to provide pre-approved layout templates to enable consistent use of the modules and speed up content production. These can be formatted for different channels and devices, e.g. iPad, smartphone, website, social media, approved email. And you can apply additional business rules to each template to ensure that best practices are followed.

MLR workstreams: Modular content will have an impact on MLR. Therefore they should be involved early to influence the process and properly prepare for the transition. While they will be doing the same things to the same high standards, the outputs will change as they focus their primary attention on modules rather than individual assets. Modular content will be highly beneficial to MLR by removing the duplication of work, but they need to have complete confidence in the new processes. And they should be involved in establishing the claims library and the business rules that specify the module use.

Global and local module libraries: Another significant change will be the global modular content library. If you are a Veeva customer, it is placed securely in your Veeva Vault. The module library will be where people find content for assembly into assets. Affiliates take these global 'master' modules, localise the content and achieve local MLR approval. Regional versions can then be stored in a local library.

Asset creation: With fully-approved content easily accessible in the library, affiliates and their agencies can now assemble the modules into as many promotional or educational resources as they require — applying local knowledge concerning the most effective messages, channels and frequency of communications. These final assets only require light approval and confirmation that the business rules have been followed.
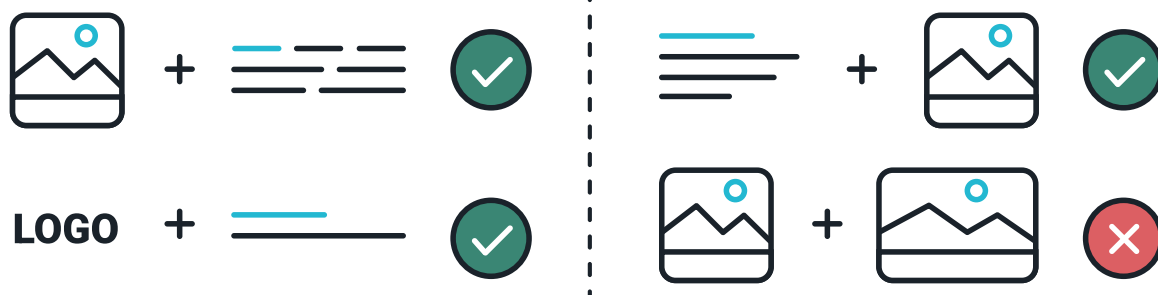
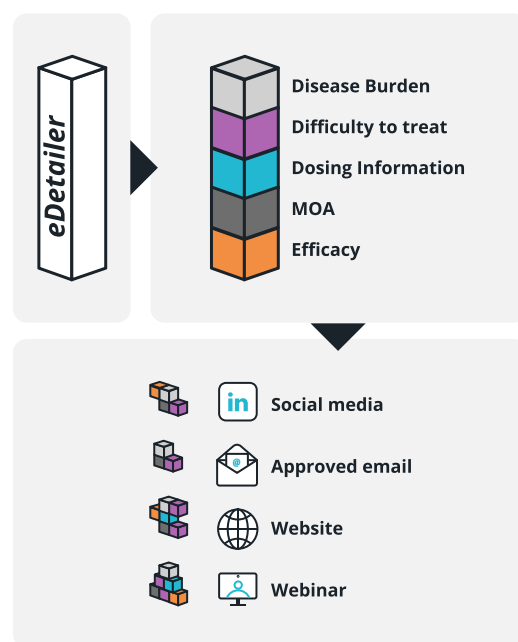*Business rules determine how modules should be used*

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🔖 HOW TO MODULARISE YOUR CONTENT

Most companies will start the modular content process by reworking existing content. This process requires breaking down assets into smaller blocks. It isn't the smallest text and image components that are needed (see above: how modular content works) but instead fully communicated mini-stories. Each module needs to convey one key message, told in full, with all required texts, images, and references.

It should be easy to 'find' nearly complete modules in your existing assets. A good exercise is to print all the content from a channel such as an eDetailer and display it on a wall. You can then literally draw around the modules that you see. These can then be 'cut out' of the asset and transformed into modular content with the metadata and tags applied and the business rules described.

This work can then be supplemented by building missing modules from individual components. For example, a message about efficacy that is explained across several slides of an eDetailer may need to come together into one module. While the modularisation process is not complicated, facilitation by an experienced pharma marketing agency partner will keep things on track and ensure that everything happens correctly.

eDetailer →	Disease Burden
	Difficulty to treat
	Dosing Information
	MOA
	Efficacy

- Social media
- Approved email
- Website
- Webinar

Modularisation process: take existing assets, deconstruct into modules, use across channels

- **Gather all relevant content (eDetailers, emails, etc.) that should be transformed into modules**

- **Identify the 'existing' modules and supplement as required**

- **Assign the correct metadata, tags and business rules**

- **Relate the required components (text, image, graph, references) to the modules**

- **Upload to your modular content library, e.g. Veeva Vault, for review and approval**

🔖 TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS FOR MODULAR CONTENT

The foundation for modular content in pharma is a digital asset management (DAM) solution such as Veeva Vault. This is the 'single source of truth' for marketing teams and regulatory reviews. It is where content is stored, shared and managed. With a DAM, content is no longer siloed in various systems (whether affiliate or agency) but instead brought together in one secure place so everyone can work with the same files. The DAM also enables the relationships between content elements to be determined, e.g. references, digital rights, metadata, business rules.

Moving to a DAM — one solution for content management, content sharing and medical reviews — should be the first step of a modular content process if it is not already in place.

In addition to a DAM, it's a good idea to use a content authoring tool. Such tools make modular content quick to create and easy to manage. For example, Anthill's content management platform Activator connects to Veeva Vault, where your content remains secure throughout its lifecycle. Yet it displays this content right in Activator and enables you to quickly build assets like eDetailers, approved email and social media — drawing on your modular content library. Activator also offers additional MLR functionality, such as providing a complete overview of approval status and content history for each content module to speed approvals.

Technology success factors:

- **Digital asset management (DAM) capabilities that support a shared library where everyone can assemble, find, review, edit, and track modules**

- **Ability to support multiple module types regardless of the asset or intended channels**

- **Ability to group content into one block that can progress in one unit from initial design to approval and use in the markets**

- **A content authoring tool that makes it easy to build assets using modular content**

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🔖 MODULAR CONTENT AND VEEVA

In 2021, Veeva made modular content a standard in PromoMats, bringing the concept to a broader audience in pharma. Their solution meets the industry's regulatory requirements — providing key functionality and enabling a great deal of specificity on content management.

✅ **Core claims:** The Veeva's modular content solution delivered the review status transparency that companies required by connecting modular content to a core claims library that in turn linked to the references. This layered structure enables MLR to trace each module's referencing in a detailed yet quick and easy way.

✅ **Lifecycles:** The Veeva modular content approach also made it possible to define content 'lifecycles', enabling the approval status of every module to be set and clearly indicated. A simple example is the standard 'draft', 'approved' and 'withdrawn' formulation, but this can be as granular and precise as your organisation requires. This approach provides both the flexibility and compliance that companies need.

✅ **Rulesets:** Business rules are also easily added to the modules. Veeva's system here enables both 'rules' and 'rulesets' which, as the name suggests, are a grouped set of business rules. Usefully, these can be saved for reuse and applied to multiple modules. In addition, lifecycles be can set for each ruleset. This enables you to switch the status of business rules when the market situation changes. For example, you can change the lifecycle to 'retired' when a specific ruleset is no longer required. The Veeva modular content approach also enables you to set different rulesets for specific countries, which can be useful when regulation differs across markets.

✅ **Roles and workflows:** Two related concepts are 'roles' and 'workflows'. Roles determine responsibilities. The default options are 'editor', 'reviewer' and 'owner'. Additional roles can be added depending on your organisational setup. Workflows detail each module's content creation and approval process, matching roles to actions at each step, i.e. MLR review. A helpful diagram displays each workflow, so a module's status can be clearly seen and tracked. Again, there is a default workflow that you can adapt to fit your organisation.

With Veeva modular content now available, there will likely be widespread adoption across pharma. If you are working with Veeva, it is crucial to set up your modular content processes correctly to make the most of the opportunities that the system provides. A pharma agency experienced in modular content should be able to advise and guide you through this process.

Start with the essential 'ingredients' by ensuring that the core claims library is correctly related to the references library. And get your asset components in order. Then take the content management capabilities that Veeva provides — lifecycles, rules, rulesets, roles and workflows — and set them to match your organisation's requirements. While most of the defaults are good options, Veeva enables you to match the system to your company's specific needs. This is recommended. It is well worth investing the time to establish these foundations correctly before implementing modular content widely in your organisation.

🔖 MODULAR CONTENT BEST PRACTICES

Implementing modular content means reworking longstanding content development processes in pharma. It is a fundamental change, but you can implement it without major disruption. The success factors detailed in this guide — vision, goals, clearly described processes — will deliver a trouble-free implementation. In addition, there are several tips, tricks and shortcuts that help ensure a smooth transition.

✅ **Pilot programmes:** Run one or more pilots to demonstrate the benefits of modular content. Applying clear metrics that have broad appeal across markets, e.g. content reuse, will make it easier to show the value.

✅ **Start small:** It is often a good idea to trial modular content in a specific part of your business, e.g. a new product or a channel like approved email. This demonstrates initial success before reworking content processes for mature products.

✅ **Champions and advocates:** Get buy-in from leaders, key internal teams and pharma agency partners. Map personnel who will be most impacted or have a big voice in the organisation. With their help, a modular content process is much easier.

✅ **'Must win' markets:** Ensure that larger affiliates (which often operate with more autonomy in pharma) are brought into the process early and that they fully understand the benefits of modular content to their market and customers.

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Core claims library: Your core claims — pre-approved statements, substantiated by references — are foundational to modular content. Investing time in building a core claims library makes the content modularisation process far easier later.

Practical onboarding: Brand teams must be onboarded correctly. In our experience, this is often most effective when the process consists of practical assignments such as exercises for modularising existing brand assets.

Showcase the potential: Create a showcase to demonstrate what's possible and how modules can be used together. This could be examples of eDetailing slides built with modular content or, even better, other assets like approved email too.

Content authoring solution: While your DAM makes modular content possible, a content authoring tool makes it easy. Assets are faster to create and content approvals can be further simplified if provides MLR features like content history metadata.

Provide templates: Creating standard templates for assets enables modules to be quickly assembled and strengthens brand uniformity. Templates for module creation can also be provided.

Share successes: The common standards of modular content make it easier to share creative work across markets. Excellent approved email content in one affiliate, for example, can now easily be implemented in other regions.

WHAT DO YOU WANT ANTHILL TO DO?

Help me design a modular content process that matches my organisation

Optimise my technology platforms, e.g. Veeva Vault, for modular content

Detail and document the content creation and approval workflows

Modularise my existing assets and assign the necessary metadata and business rules

Engage stakeholders in a change management process that builds internal support

Unlock Veeva Vault's modular content potential with Activator

START THE CONVERSATION

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