



Incremental value delivery

WGSN

Image Management Project Planning

Project	Modernisation plan for WGSN image management tools
Role	Lead Product Designer
Timeline	12 weeks (extended to 5 months)
Team	Hybrid, UK and US-based

Challenge

WGSN is the world's leading consumer trend forecaster. It produces data-enriched catwalk libraries from the world's fashion weeks. Publishing speeds were being impaired by inefficient processes and outdated tools.

The company wanted to address concerns about loss of competitive edge due to lack of investment and modernisation of its first party tools (and training). A previous team had focused on designing a new tool but the understanding needed to inform the making of new designs was missing.

My Role

I was engaged for 12 weeks (extended to 5 months) to lead a discovery project. The goal was to deeply understand the tools and processes used by WGSN's Image Management (IM) team, who are responsible for image processing and data enrichment. I was brought in to create a viable modernisation plan for the team's main tool, RACE. I worked alongside a Product Manager within WGSN's cross-Atlantic Product and Design team.

Solution

The approach I took in this engagement was to establish a guiding principle to ground my recommendations:

| Increase team ownership and job satisfaction over time

My goal was to ensure I gained the trust of the people I interacted with so reiterated this principle whenever we met. The purpose was to dispel any notions of consultants, for example, seeking to reduce headcount.

To give colleagues and stakeholders confidence in the process, I put together a Project Engagement Timetable, which detailed and agreed project activities, priorities and timings with stakeholders. The plan was:

- Review and understand the service's people, processes and technology
- Identify team dynamics, process inefficiencies and outdated technology
- Investigate adjacent initiatives and industry best practice
- Identify optimisation opportunities
- Synthesise the findings into a modernisation roadmap

To gain a proper understanding of the IM team's challenges, I conducted an audit of their processes, people and technology.

People

Working with the IM team was crucial to the success of this engagement. I liaised with their leadership and direct reports, respectful of their limited time. I conducted long form research interviews and a comprehensive survey to understand their pain points. This included uncovering how the team were affected by the replacement of long-serving staff with inexperienced colleagues who required lots of training, further impacting their workload and delivery lead times.

Processes

With assistance and support from the IM team, as well as other stakeholders across the organisation I was able to map out the processes involved in data enriching and image publishing.

Reviewed the systems and procedures employed by the IM team in the execution of their duties. This research extended to adjacent teams and processes that impacted on IM. This was valuable to get a good understanding of the context certain decisions were made in.

Technology

Through discussion with WGSN's Data team, it became clear that there was R&D work to bring some AI-powered automations to the image management and data-enrichment process. These innovations were subsequently factored into the roadmap and calculations. Some third-party utilities and the introduction of improved workflow management tools would contribute to the modernisation.

Other activities

The Product Manager and I ran a business model canvas exercise to uncover latent value and relationships, and to understand where some of the emphasis of our efforts should be placed.

I created a Project Roadmap which detailed in simple steps how the modernisation could be achieved. This included recommendations for incorporating other initiatives and optimisations for team utilisation.

Outcome

My calculations indicated that implementing my recommendations would boost publishing speeds by 2.6x. The IM team were empowered to make use of the Smartsheets solution I had outlined for them. At the end of my tenure I briefed another product manager who took over liaison with the IM team.

Based on my roadmap and research a Product Manager who took over the work stream reported that they:

Optimised and streamlined third-party Catwalk show image processing and management (81% faster)

The Image Management team's Senior Digital Asset Manager, quoted in [Anatomy of a catwalk image](#), said:

Starting from Women's S/S 25, we will speed up data delivery to our clients by leveraging AI to tag, crop and colour-tag key categories within minutes of receiving Catwalk data. Our human experts will then do a fast follow, reviewing the work from the AI model and amending and adding relevant information to ensure our high and unrivalled accuracy.

Calculations for 2.6x speed boost

TARGET METRICS	
Optimisations	
Auto post to RACE	0.00 seconds / image. Estimate
Auto rename	0.00 seconds / image. Estimate
Auto designer crediting	0.40 seconds / image. Estimate. Assuming possible
Automated tagging	6.00 seconds / image. Would only do top level tagging. Manual tagging would still be required. Estimate of 50% of manual tagging time
Auto gendering	0.10 seconds / image. Estimate
Auto Cropping	22.09 seconds / image. Conservative estimate: 50% of manual cropping time
Total including optimisations	29.59 seconds / image
Catwalk images / year	144,704 Based on Catwalk Seasonal Stats 2021
Optimised time to process a year's catwalk images	4,136,860.24 seconds
	153.22 7.5 hour days
Using the full team's capacity (17 members)	9.01 days. (No allowance for seniority, experience, time off etc.)
Time savings	17.54 days (additional capacity given back to the team)
As a percentage	295% more capacity. 2.6x quicker
Operational impacts and potential team shape	
Current total headcount	23 Including 7 new LATAM team members
How to optimise the team? Theoretically the same work could be done by a team of 6-7 people, leaving ~10 team members to focus on:	6 IM headcount needed to complete optimised workload
(a) Quality control	2
(b) Clearing the submissions backlog	2 (temporary; est. 3 months with optimisations in place). Move both to (c) once backlog cleared
(c) Addressing new verticals	3 Review 2023 priorities. Accelerate the New > Investment in data, content
(d) Training the data models and other team members	2
7 new IM team members based on LATAM	7 Working on Instock (replacing TCS)
Revised total	22

Expertise applied

- Taking a broad, systems thinking approach to problem solving
- Research and synthesise fragmented inputs into a cohesive project plan
- Conduct user and stakeholder research to uncover issues
- Business process audit and analysis
- Data analysis and insight
- Engaging senior stakeholders to support the project
- Team liaison and collaboration
- Collaboration and communication with non-technical colleagues

To learn more about this and other data-driven, business analysis and user experience projects, please contact:

Stephen Hellens / info@stephenhellens.com / [07976 360099](tel:07976360099)

Appendix

Project resources and documents

<u>Engagement timetable</u>	Schedule of research and develop the product roadmap
<u>Press release</u>	North Star to define the project vision and inspire ambition
<u>Business case</u>	Written to explain the need for project investment. Explored alternative modernisation approaches
<u>Tools and processes map</u>	Map of current tools and processes used by the IM team
<u>Business model canvas</u>	Uncover latent value and relationships, and to understand where some of the emphasis of our efforts should be placed
<u>Smartsheet document plan</u>	Workflow management tools to replace IM's spreadsheets
<u>Project Roadmap</u>	Detailed in simple steps how the modernisation could be achieved. This included recommendations for incorporating other initiatives and optimisations for team utilisation
<u>Project Library</u>	Collection of previous and current research, team internal training documentation, and final project documents

Engagement Timetable (partial view)

Aug	1-5 (2 days)	Onboarding and orientation					
	8-12	Planning	Define and agree scope	Define and agree activities	Define and agree timings	Identify stakeholders	
	15-19	Research	Desk research	Identify systems and owners	Business Model Canvas		Stephen's off days
	22-26 (2 days)	Plan next steps					24-26 (3 days)
Sep	30-2 (1 day)	Interim playback	Wardley mapping				30-1 (3 days)
	5-9	Knowledge share	Kick off with experts and stakeholders	Knowledge gathering from experts	Product strategy and pillars defined		
	12-16	Synthesis, feature mapping, playback	Defining user needs and map to process	Create a draft plan / roadmap / prioritised feature enhancements	Playback work so far to Kiran and Ryan		
	19-23	Roadmap and playback	Watch catwalk process live	Scope definition	Playback to IM leadership	Roadmap drafting	
Oct	26-30	Engineering and next steps	Engineering feasibility and discovery kick off	Define next steps	Business case	Gathering relevant knowledge across Ascential brands	
	3-7	Technical discovery	Solution discussion	Assess the effort of features (data and engineering)	Business case	Sponsor buy in	

Press release

To inspire and guide the team I wrote a fictional press release:

Today WGSN announced VICE, the company's next generation real time visual analysis product exclusively for WGSN customers. It's available now to customers at vice.wgsn.com.

VICE has been rethought to become the companion in providing customers with realtime catwalk and retail imagery with enriching context and insight.

"Our customers are always at the forefront of what we do." said the WGSN Product Manager. "With this new version of VICE we bring together the fastest image retrieval and enrichment pipeline with realtime trends and forecasting data. This development puts a new platform at our customers' disposal, one in which they will be able to generate reports before the models have even left the catwalks."

Business case

WGSN RACE Modernisation

Business Case

Stephen Hellens, Product Designer and , Lead Product Manager

Nov 1, 2022

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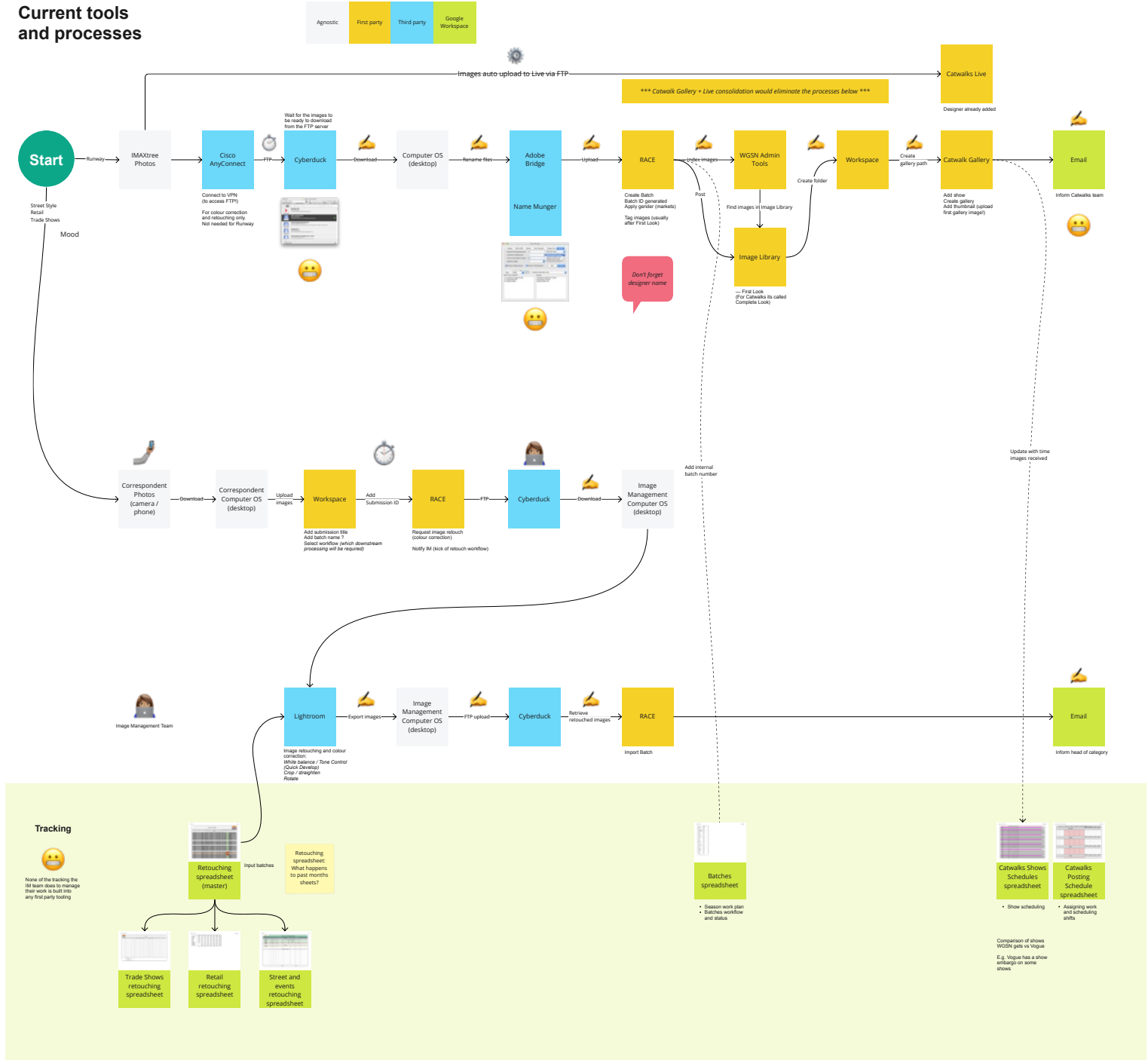
Executive Summary

For more than two decades customers have come to expect world-class content from WGSN. It stands that our ability to reach our customers relies on world-class content provisioning systems. When RACE was introduced in 2012, it was heralded as such. Over time, technology and customer expectations have evolved.

What was cutting edge in 2012 is now in 2022 hampering WGSN's opportunities to establish and grow new products with new audiences. We need to invest in our tooling so we can continue to be the world-leading authority in fashion, while delivering new capabilities in data analysis.

RACE modernisation is estimated to cost £N and take N months to complete. The good news is, tangible time and cost saving benefits can be realised from the very start of this programme of improvement.

Current tools and processes



RACE tools and processes

The understanding in this diagram was iteratively derived through interviews and shadowing of WGSN’s Image Management team. It identifies first and third party applications, manual work, delays and team pain points.

The green shaded area captures the team’s internal documentation. It was used to drive recommendations in the final Product Roadmap.

RACE Business Model Canvas

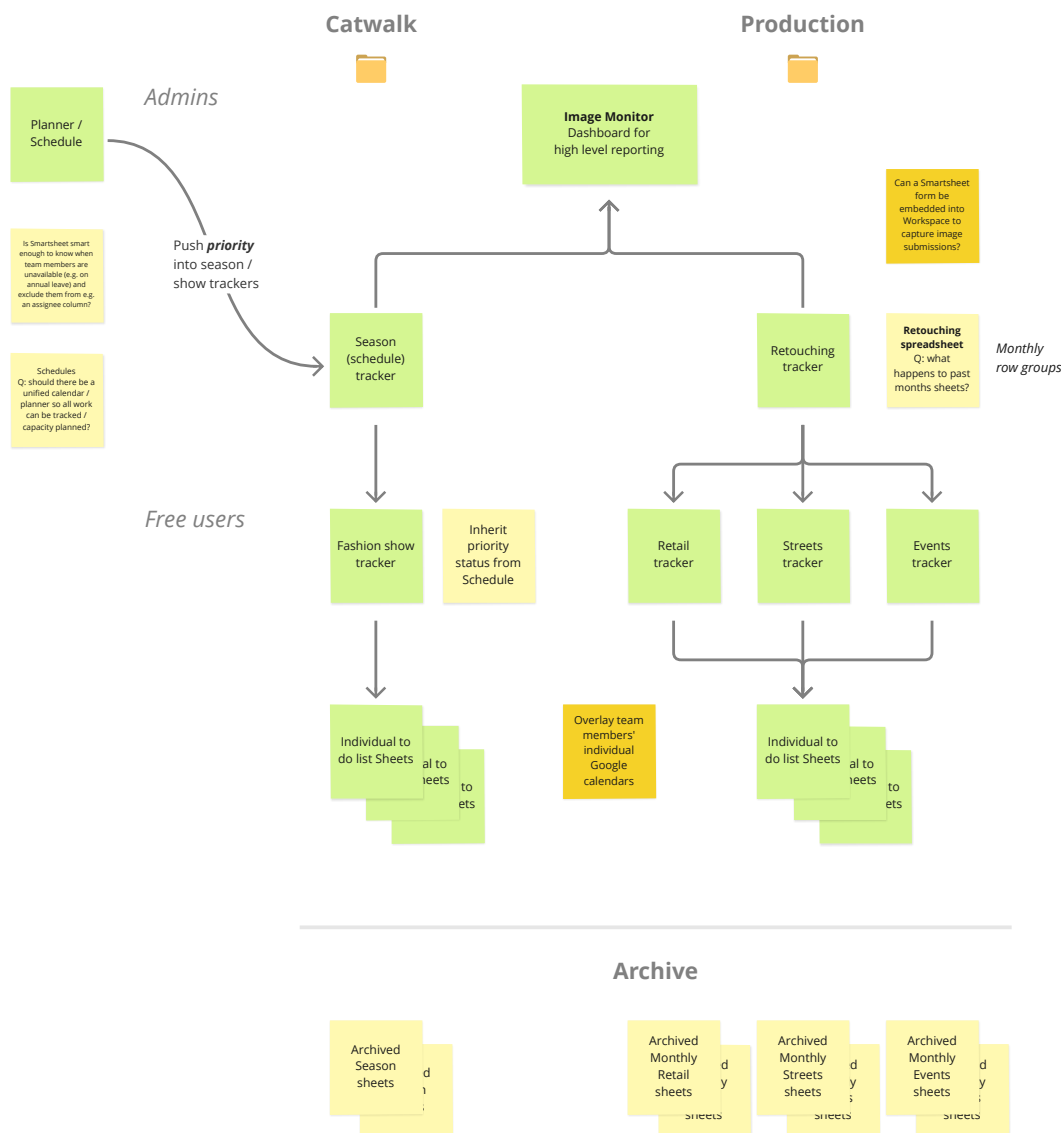


Source: [Strategyzer AG](#) | License: [CC-BY-SA 3.0](#)

Early in the engagement I proposed to the Product Manager responsible for the work stream that there would be value in exploring the underlying business model that powers the image management process.

The exercise was helpful to ensure we were aligned and helped us uncover additional avenues to research that we might not have otherwise considered.

Smartsheet document plan



This diagram details the new collection of working documents I put together for the Image Management team to replace their standalone spreadsheets to manage their work. The documents are Smartsheets, which include smart processes and automations.

Smartsheet is a work management and collaboration tool to assist with project management, task tracking, reporting and team collaboration.

Through first-hand research with editorial team members I learnt that it was being used elsewhere within WGSN to co-ordinate and manage publishing and editing workflows. I suggested using it for the IM team, as I believed it would greatly benefit them. I organised training for the team with the Content Design team and helped set them up with Smartsheet after my engagement.

The plan was based on the principle of incrementally replacing existing tools and processes with updated ones across a six step process. It accounted for decommissioning software and team training. The new tool, codenamed *Sushi* would run alongside RACE while being rigorously tested until the team had full confidence that RACE could be deprecated and decommissioned.



Project Library

Walkthrough videos

Thumbnail	Video Title	Duration	Date	Description
	RACE Image Importing Demo	58:46	2022-05-17	Dena walks Ajmal and Paul through RACE image importing. Lots of focus on workflow and UX challenges.
	RACE Batch Tutorial	2:08:43	2021-12-17	Details the process of importing, cropping, tagging and colour tagging a catwalk show.
	Image Demonstration and RACE 4 Jistack Demo	1:03:29	2022-07-29	Ahmed walks Emma, Dena, Ryan etc. through RACE 4. Jistack and beta implementations of auto tag, crop, colour tag, white balance.
	RACE walkthrough with Cara	51:26	2022-09-20	Cara DeCristofaro demos RACE to Stephen.
	Introduction to Smartsheet	42:22	2022-11-08	Recorded with Cassandra and Dena (JM) and Emily and Diana (Design).

Business case and supporting documents

Thumbnail	Document Title	Description
	Catwalk analytics: Data Pull process	2021-05-14
	RACE Automation steps - estimated time saved	2022-05-17
	Image Management worksheet analysis for Smartsheet	2021-12-17
	RACE Modernisation - supporting information	2021-12-17
	Journey of an image	2021-12-17
	Business Case	2021-12-17

Previous research Miro boards

Thumbnail	Miro Board Title	Description
	VICE - Outcomes	Sign up Miro Online Whiteboard for Visual Collaboration
	VICE - Existing Workflow	Sign up Miro Online Whiteboard for Visual Collaboration

Introduction to Smartsheets

Google Drive: Sign-in

Access Google Drive with a Google account (for personal use) or Google Workspace account (for business use).

Image Management | Workflow spreadsheets

Runway (Catwalk)

Thumbnail	Spreadsheet Title
	Catwalks Shows Schedule
	Catwalks Posting Schedule
	Batches: Catwalks
	Catwalks Seasonal Stats

Production (Retail, Trade, Street)

Thumbnail	Spreadsheet Title
	Retouching
	Retail and buying
	Trade show and exhibitions
	Street style and events

Image Management | Training documents

Thumbnail	Document Title	Description
	Catwalk Analytics: Data Pull process	2021-05-14
	RACE Automation steps - estimated time saved	2022-05-17
	Image Management worksheet analysis for Smartsheet	2021-12-17
	RACE Modernisation - supporting information	2021-12-17
	Journey of an image	2021-12-17
	Business Case	2021-12-17

Image Management | Training documents (to be reviewed)

Thumbnail	Document Title	Description
	Image Management: Crediting Materials	2021-12-17
	Image Management: Master Materials	2021-12-17
	How to: Catwalk Process	2021-12-17

This document handover is structured into groups of assets to support the incoming Product Manager to execute the roadmap.