Uber EMEA in-house brand creative agency leverages SO DIGITAL GLOBAL BRAND CONTENT EXCELLENCE PLATFORM to enable scalable brand creative support to 47 countries and market level growth marketing teams

Background

Located at global or regional headquarters the mission of brand-creative in-house teams is to consolidate creative operations into a single creative center of excellence that supports & guides local business units (countries) in brand creative campaign implementation. At the end of 2016, in order to continue its scalable global growth, while reasserting more control over its brand, Uber centralized digital brand creative & marketing campaign management operations in Europe, Middle East and Africa. A new team was being formed in Amsterdam Uber EMEA headquarters which was to takeover some of the functions from market level teams and marketing managers in countries. Centralizing digital brand creative & marketing campaign management was driven due to budget rationalization reasoning, but also a growing brand inconsistency across the markets. As with any centripetal change and transference of authority & budgets away from markets where money is actually made, there was strong opposition and skepticism towards HQ's ability to fulfill its new role. Highly dynamic local markets, with acquisition hungry and opportunity driven growth marketeers, distrusted the new head-quarter based team to provide both timely and locally relevant brand creative content support. Cities in countries are places where money is made, and marketeers made sure they voiced their dissatisfaction, challenging the new organizational model set-up. Surrounded by the air of organizational hesitation, the new in-house brand creative team was in an unenviable position – needing to lead a high stake, high visibility change project that few truly wanted to succeed. Despite the fact they were just recently founded, needing time just to handle own internal team growth and operations challenges, as country brand creative content support requests started to pour in, there was neither time nor room for mistakes.

Executive summary

If not systematized properly, country brand creative content support request and adaptation & implementation demand streams, can cause havoc for internal in-house brand creative team's scheduling and put a major strain on already limited resources. Number, heterogeneity and frequency of country brand content demands created congestions and long waiting times. Long waiting times to central headquarter brand team's fulfilment, also meant team frustration, competitive infighting between headquarters and countries, but worst of all meant missed market opportunities. Inadequate digital enablement of the newly founded in-house creative team, lack of definition and implementation of processes and standard operating creative procedures between headquarters and countries, created an unsustainable workload and undermined the very predisposition of global branding – brand consistency across markets. Escalating failures to fulfill the market brand creative needs on time brought the centralized brand creative support model under question.
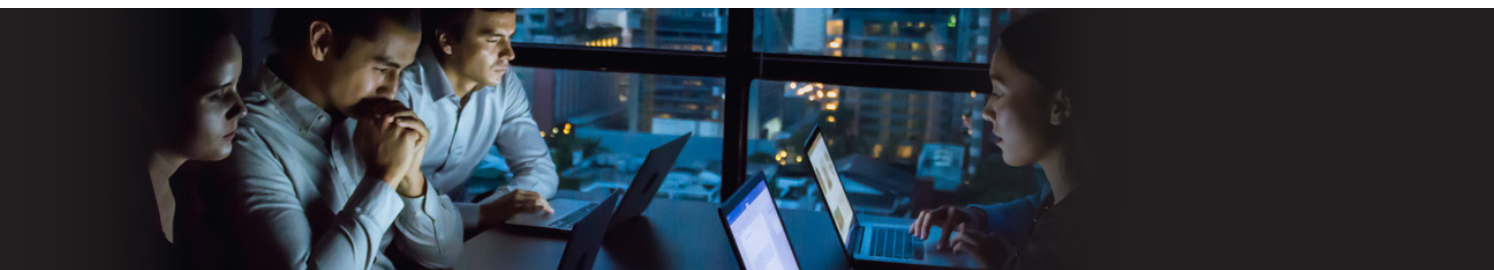
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About the client

Uber Technologies Inc. is an American multinational transportation network company (TNC) offering services that include peer-to-peer ridesharing, ride service hailing, food delivery, and a bicycle-sharing system. Founded in 2009, Uber soon took lead among Silicone Valley 'unicorns', **being valued over $72 billion in 2018,** *and known as the most valuable startup in the world. Based in San Francisco,* **Uber operates in 83 countries and over 858 cities worldwide.** *Its platforms can be accessed via its websites and mobile apps. As of 2019, Uber is estimated to have 110 million worldwide users a 69.0% market share in the United States for passenger transport, and a 25% market share for food delivery. As a rapidly growing company, Uber is a high paced & highly fluid work environment, with average tenure of only 2,2 years. With top priority being achievement of growth and revenue targets,* **employee growth rates ranging up to 55% YoY,** *hard work culture that aggressively growing startups often demand, Uber was, even publicly, known for challenging and somewhat chaotic workplace.*

RAPID GROWTH PHASE

36,476 total employees

▲ 55% 2y growth

Average tenure · 1.7 years

Source : Linkedin company insights.

The challenge

For a while the EMEA in-house creative team managed to handle a majority of request for marketing materials and activations they started receiving from countries within a new cooperation framework. But, soon experienced both resource, alignment and coordination challenges which were hampering their day to day operations. Wrong digital tooling made bad things worse. Favored by engineers, which composed the biggest and most influential employee cohort at Uber, Jira - issue & project tracking software, already globally adopted throughout the organization, crept into use for brand creative content request by countries. As it was neither aesthetically nor functionally envisioned for brand creative materials request management nor brand creative users, instead of time saving and clarity, usage of Jira just created more frustration and waste of time. This technology vs. use case mismatch was coupled with mismanagement of Box.com file storage & sharing software which quickly became an organizational repository bin where everyone and anyone was dropping creative files and versions, later impossible to quickly find for country, brand approved, campaign usage. With exponentially rising number of requests, improper technology (un)supported in-house creative team, EMEA level brand creative support started to equal one thing: email chaos, asset chases, online conferences with marketeers across the EMEA region and late nights at the office. Frustrated with lack of proper support, missed market opportunities due to lost or late brand creative campaign content email deliveries, and general disconnection between EMEA in-house brand creative service level and local market needs, even country level GMs started to get involved. Heated email discussions started to spread across the organization.

The solution

After a couple of joint workshop sessions with key stakeholders of the EMEA in-house marketing agency **SO DIGITAL** helped diagnose main operational bottlenecks and challenges of the current way of working. The interplay of (1) centralization of digital brand campaign management, (2) in-housing of brand creative capabilities and (3) inadequate digital enablement of new operational model, where in-house creative headquarter team is now responsible for centralized creation, implementation & distribution of brand content materials back to country level; has created a chaotic work environment where employee 'burnouts' were becoming more a matter of 'when' rather than 'if'. The problem lied in the fact that variety is a disabler of scalability. To solve variety, one needs to seek to standardize it. As standardization is a prerequisite for scalability, that meant that country brand content supply and requests needed to be standardized as much as possible. Once they was standardized and/or categorized, both workflow demand and fulfilment steps need to be codified within tailored technology solution that would enable scalability of market brand content requests handling.
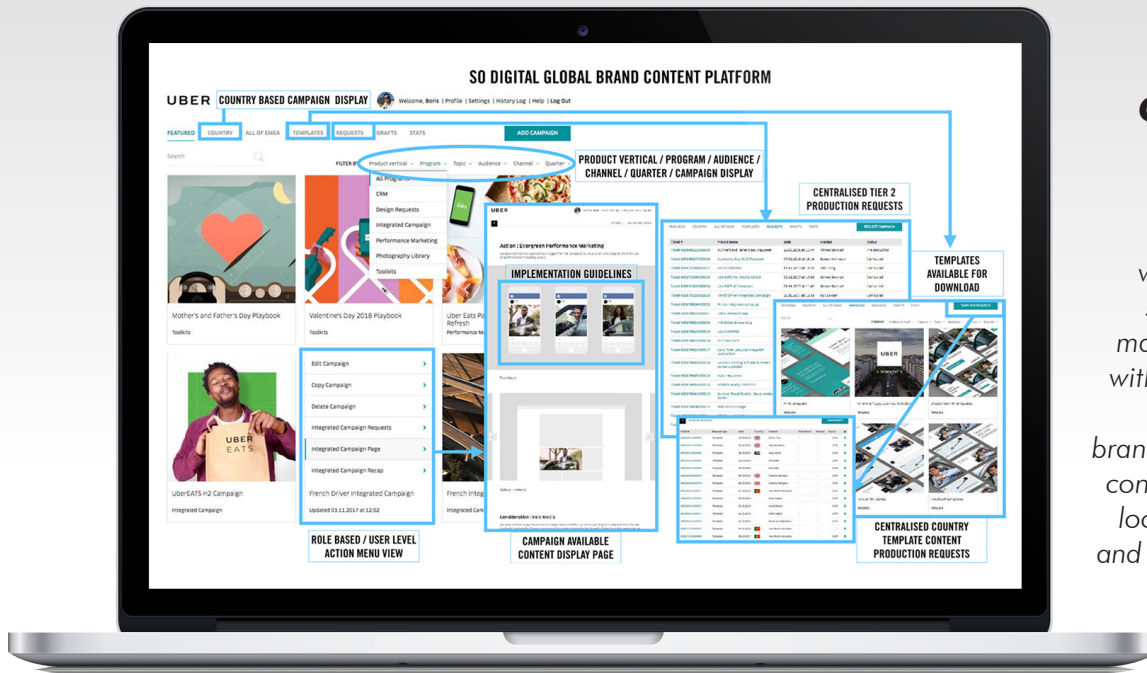

SO DIGITAL GLOBAL BRAND CONTENT EXCELLENCE PLATFORM was at the heart of our solution to effectively manage the relationship with local business units in terms of creative brand direction, campaign content demand streams, local adaptation request and cross-country learning.

Our solution leveraged technology to systematize and simplify market-by-market visibility and availability of brand approved campaign directives and brand content, while providing scalable digital production support resources of principal partnership agency for tier 2, tier 3 content design execution and/or adaptation requests by markets / stakeholders. Within continuous improvement efforts, we were able to optimize and redesign the creative operational model between headquarters and countries to speed up and scale up brand creative execution. As platform introduced structure and categorization both on the content supply side and content demand side, while providing detailed implementation guidelines, creative in-house team was relieved from repetitive communication and operational project administration tasks, and could provide scalable creative brand excellence support as a foundation for brand growth.

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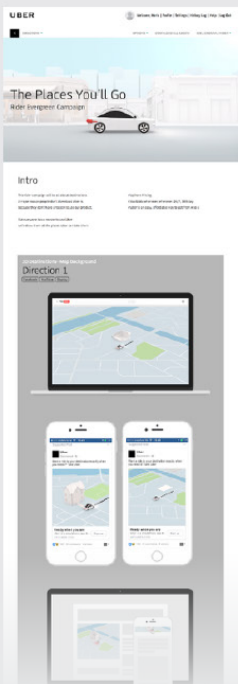
BEFORE vs AFTER

BEFORE

Actual contents were visually trapped within existing individual folders structure. Users would need to go into each individual folder / subfolder to view (download and open) assets just to check whether they want / can use them. This arduous set-up kept time poor growth marketeers away from using EMEA level brand approved content.
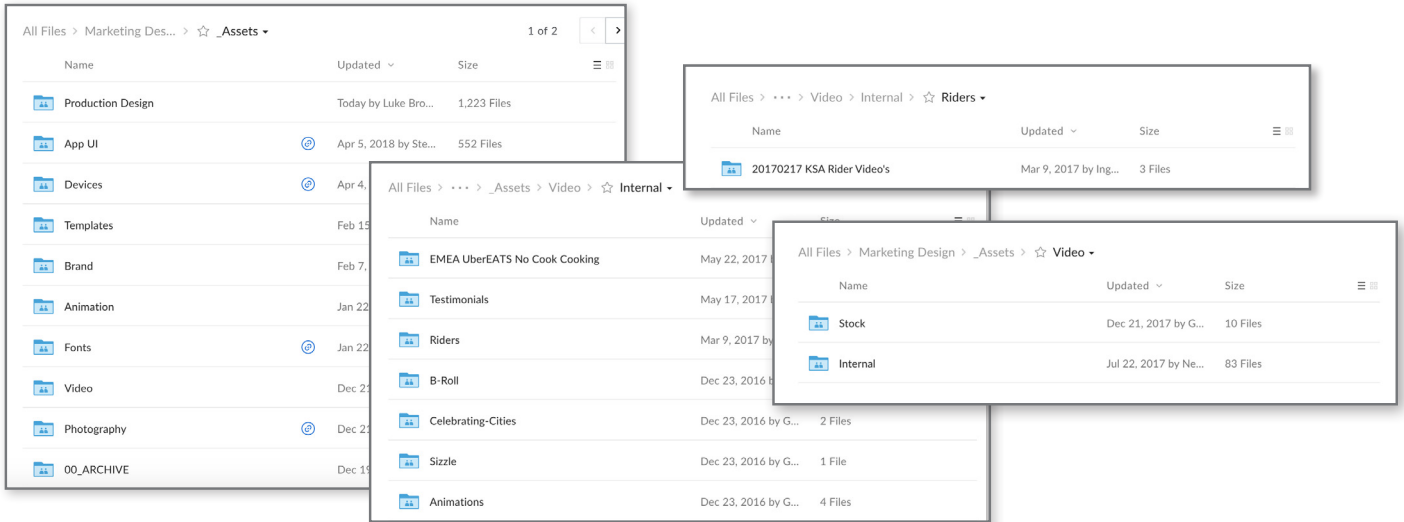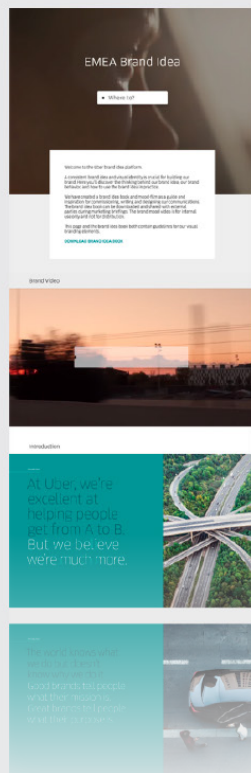

AFTER

In contrast to DAM solution architecture which focuses on organisation of assets, **SO DIGITAL CONTENT PLATFORM** focuses on organising brand campaigns & directives within which assets exists and are made available for download. In case some are missing users can send additional content request directly from the campaign pages.
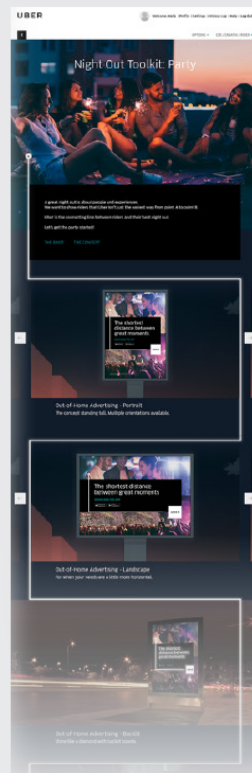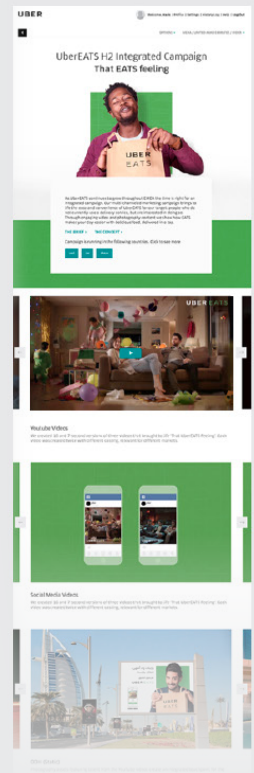
Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4

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BEFORE vs AFTER

BEFORE

Country brand content request were handled & managed through Jira requests whose ticket handling interface was neither aesthetically nor functionally envisioned for creative content use case nor creative designer users. This mismatch between user profile and digital tool selection obstructed the user adoption (read more on user adoption) and consequently the creative content operations process. Hours were being wasted in deciphering needs and managing the requests in a software inadequate for creative asset management - no previews of attached files, file extension problems etc.
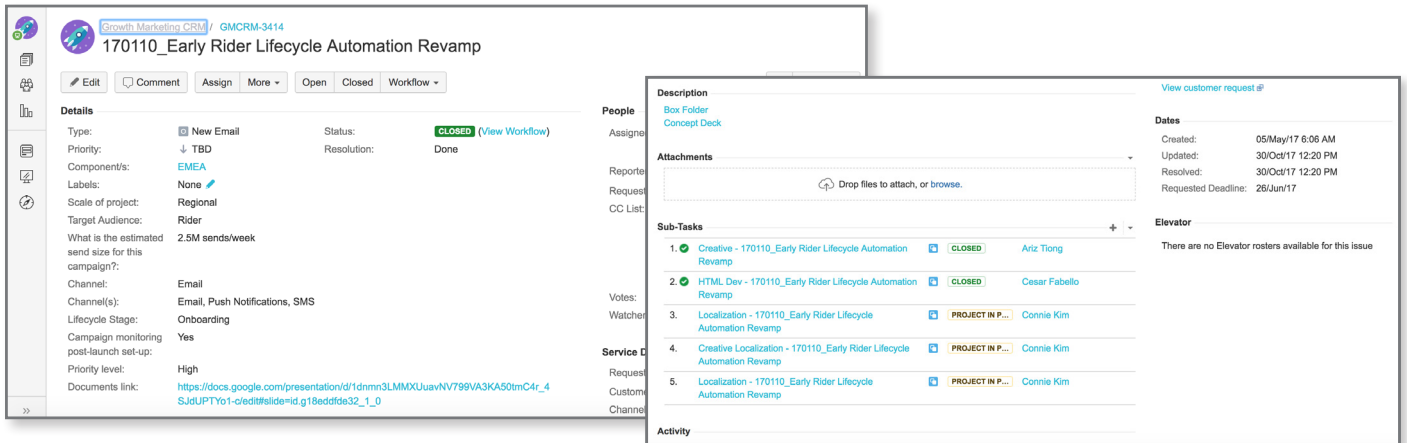
AFTER

Instead of Jira tickets, country content requests are handled through the platform interface. Multiple level triage - by categorisation of campaign content presented and requests sent from, to channel and type of assets. Problems of incomplete briefs were reduced through mandatory step-by-step completion process. Given the standardisation of assets, hours price intervals are already attached / estimated in the process, removing the need for excess communication.

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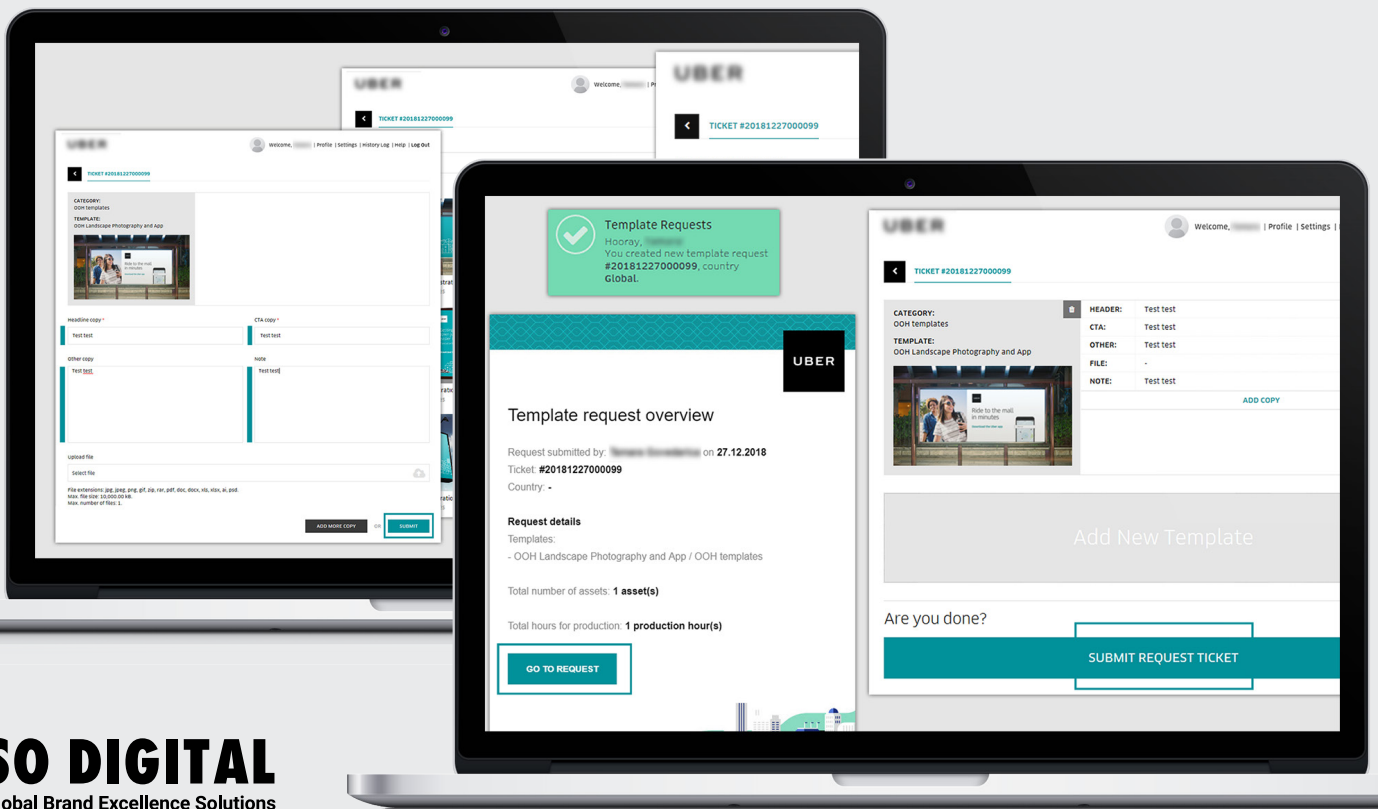
Brand content visual repository overhaul

In order to cater to the basic country user level need – to have a quick, easy and transparent overview of the campaign materials already available for download, preliminary phase of the platform solution implementation entailed the visual overhaul of the brand content asset repository spread though-out the individual Box.com folders. Assets were gathered, systematized and enabled for easy and quick access through digital implementation guidelines and interactive implementation mockups. Instead of letting countries loose to scavenge for assets in (already mismanaged) Box.com folders, wasting time and risking poor choices, countries level users were indirectly guided through well-organized brand content overview supplemented with interactive implementation guidelines and final asset download ability.

UBER & SO DIGITAL 2018
Content platform

Q4

NEW

FEATURED COUNTRY ALL OF EMEA REQUESTS TEMPLATES

_____ Campaign Page Categorization

BACKGROUND, HEADER AND FOOTER CUSTOMIZATION
ENABLED

CUSTOM ELEMENT POSITIONING
DISABLED

FONT TYPE AND SIZE CUSTOMIZATION
ENABLED

NEW

NEW MOCKUPS
TOTAL 97

CAMPAIGN SECTIONS CUSTOMIZATION
ENABLED: TITLE/SUBTITLE FONT SIZE, COLOR AND POSITION, SECTION BACKGROUND IMAGE, VIDEO OPTIONS PER SECTION (AUTOPLAY, LOOP, SOUND ON-OFF)

WE'VE CREATED A BRAND NEW TYPE OF A CAMPAIGN PAGE THAT WILL INCLUDE ALL CAMPAIGNS AND REQUESTS IN THE FUTURE.

FILES/UPLOAD	**15.055** ↑	
ASSETS	**39.206** ↑	
SECTIONS CREATED	**459** ↑	
BRIEFING	JIRA/BRIEF FORM REQUEST	

PRODUCTION — STATIC, SOCIALS, VIDEO, HTML 5 B ANIMATED, HTML IN-VIDEO, RADIO

STATISTICS ↑
134 CAMPAIGNS   **297** REGISTERED USERS

MODULES — CAMPAIGN LIST, PROOFING, CAMPAIGN PAGE, STATISTIC, ONE LOGIN AUTHENTICATION, CAMPAIGN REQUEST, ADDITIONAL REQUEST / BRIEF FORM

Redesigned & optimized brand creative content operations between headquarters and countries.

Within our continuous improvement approach, we uncovered additional challenges of operational execution between headquarters and countries. Two problems emerged. Since there was no structure / categorization of requests at the source of the demand / countries, there was no possibility of optimization. Similar types and variations of requests were handled numerous times, with duplication across countries. There was no specialization in the intake of request. Moreover, creatives who were supposed to brief the PPA (principal partnership agency – us at the moment) for overflow in peak demand times, in existing setup were actually additionally burdened with delegation project management. Handing over projects to external partners was burning time they did not have. After being given deeper insight the internal organisation, we offered and implemented a redesigned and optimized model, where intake of requests was categorized via platform structure, enabling specialization, automated pricing estimates, removing excessive and repetitive communication, while providing updated content insight and overview to all other countries.

BEFORE vs AFTER

BEFORE

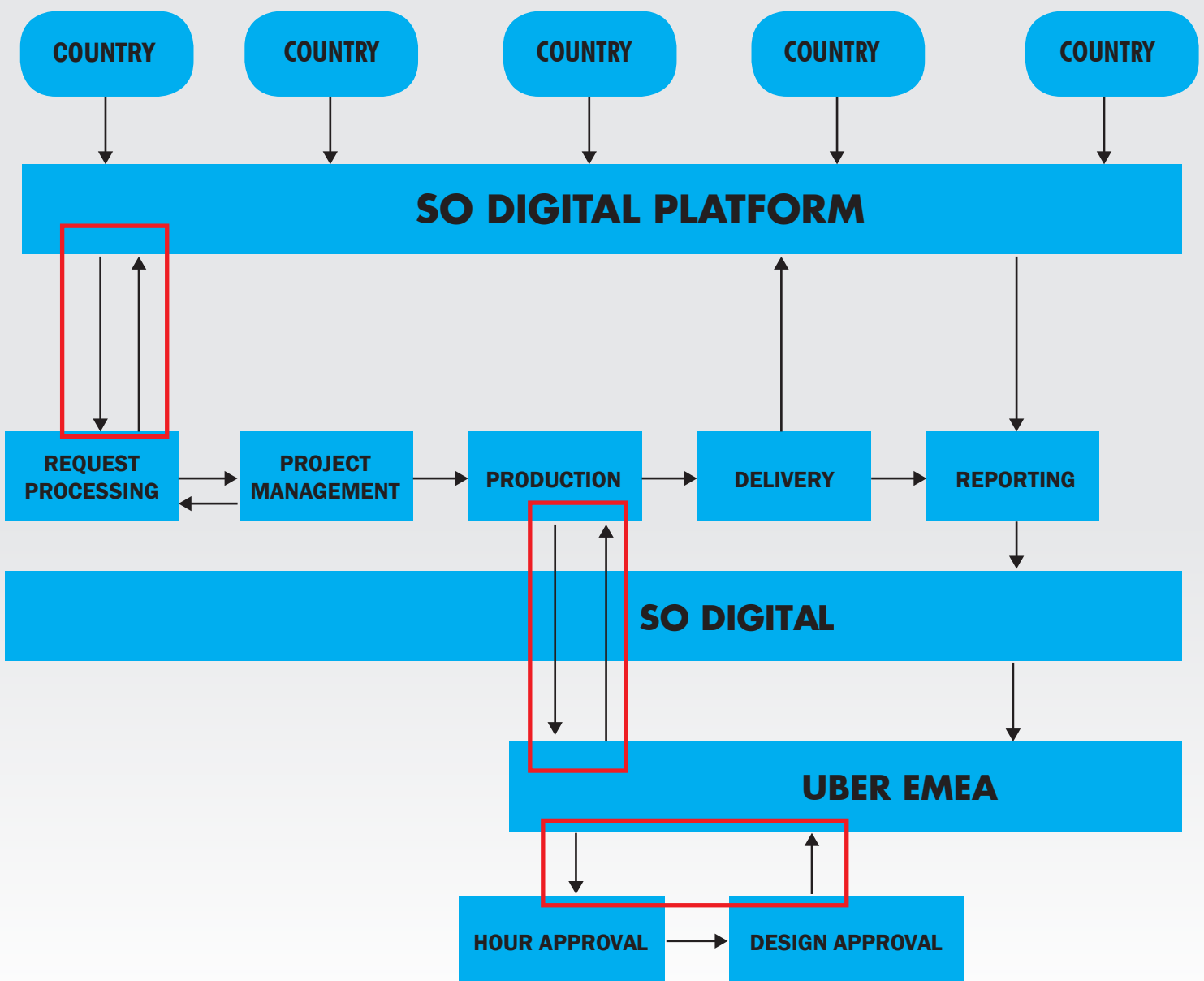## NO STRUCTURE AT THE SOURCE OF THE DEMAND

As we were allowed a deeper insight into organisation, we uncovered a "hidden", time consuming, process which was burdening already overburdened in-house creatives -delegating and handing over work to external partners.

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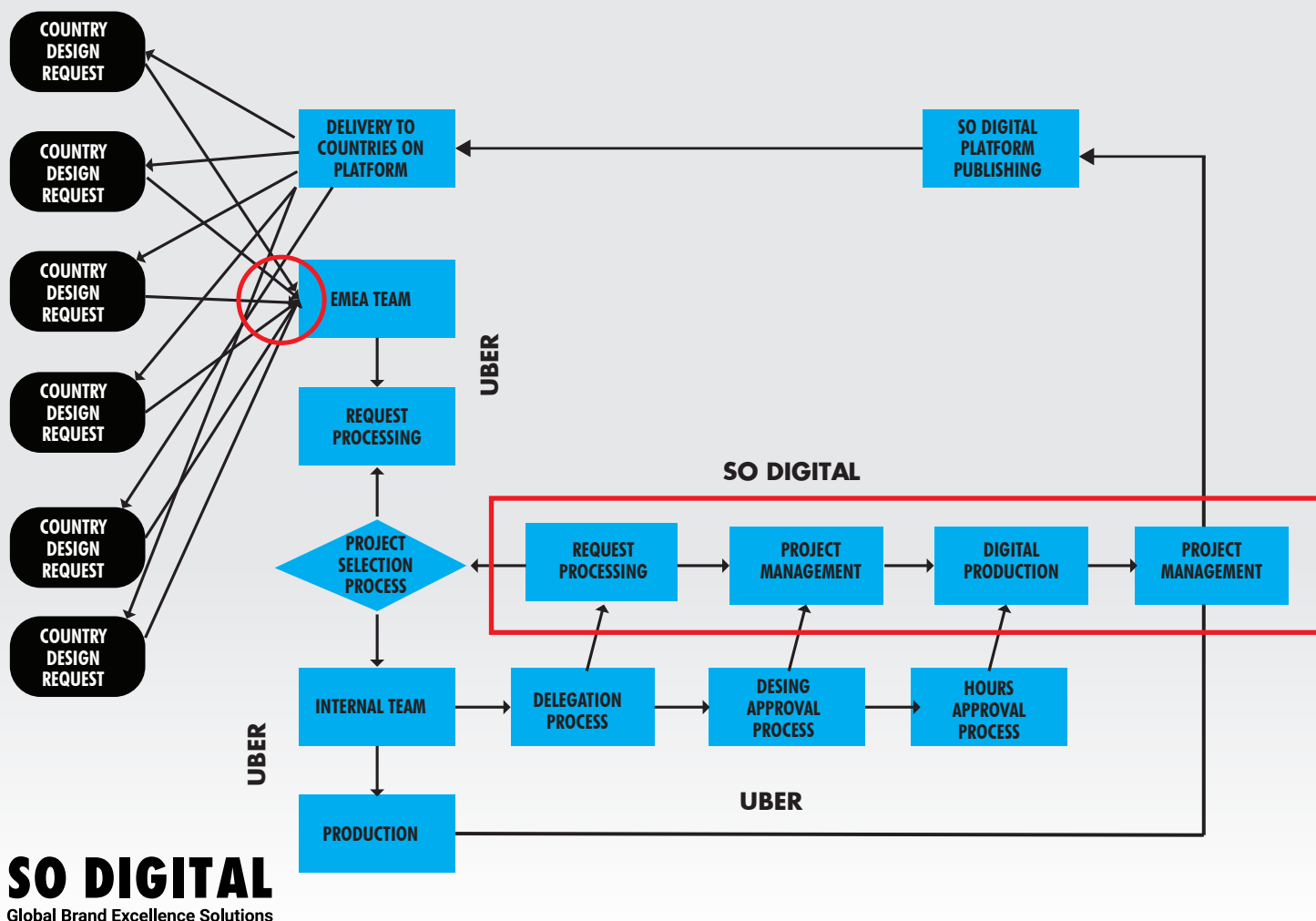
BEFORE vs AFTER

AFTER

Acting on the observed challenge we iterated on the solution and proposed an optimised operations model where country content requests would be categorised (and some solved) through : 1) platform brand campaign content supply presentation 2) within campaign / category selection and digitised ordering workflow. Platform would handle intake of the requests, directly to PPA, while during the distribution back to countries, pre-delivery final approval of assets to be distributed back to countries needed to be reviewed and checked off by EMEA designer.

COUNTRY COUNTRY COUNTRY COUNTRY COUNTRY

SO DIGITAL PLATFORM

REQUEST PROCESSING → PROJECT MANAGEMENT → PRODUCTION → DELIVERY → REPORTING

SO DIGITAL

UBER EMEA

HOUR APPROVAL → DESIGN APPROVAL

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Results

PROCESS STANDARDIZATION, DIGITIZATION & OPTIMIZATION VIA PLATFORM EXECUTION

2 ORGANIZATIONAL LEVELS CONNECTED (EMEA – COUNTRIES)	**10+** PLATFORM MODULES	**3** MONTHS START-UP IMPLEMENTATION TO FIRST ROLL-OUT
47 EMEA COUNTRIES ONBOARDED TO PLATFORM	**290+** USERS ALIGNED VIA THE PLATFORM	**134+** CAMPAIGNS HOSTED
39K+ ASSETS AVAILABLE ON PLATFORM	**97** IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINE ELEMENTS	**10K** HOURS SAVED IN PERIOD 2016– 2018
3x OPTIMIZED WORKFLOW CONTENT OPERATIONS BETWEEN HQ AND COUNTRIES	**200%** FASTER SERVICE TO COUNTRIES FOR TYPE 1, 2 CONTENT REQUESTS	**900+** COUNTRY CONTENT REQUESTS HANDLED VIA PLATFORM

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