



How a hybrid CMS empowers Marketing and IT.

Content management for everyone.



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1. The content management challenge.

Modern businesses are managing and maintaining an enormous amount of content changes — sometimes as many as thousands per day. With content-driven experiences on the rise, and the ensuing demand to constantly push out more, the need to find efficient and effective ways to manage content across all channels is an increasingly high priority for digital leaders. In fact, the value of the global content management system (CMS) market is projected to reach \$94 billion by 2023, according to a recent report¹.

As the market for content management grows, the question changes from whether or not you should invest in a CMS, to which type to go for: is a headless, traditional, or hybrid system best? Traditional web-oriented content management systems, which tie the front-end and back-end architecture together, have historically been the primary method for managing and delivering content experiences. But with the need to reach customers through new channels and devices — mobile apps, smart devices, digital assistants, and more — the traditional CMS is being disrupted by

headless CMS architectures, which decouple the front-end systems from the back-end. In fact, headless CMS adoption is predicted to double within a year.

With customers spending almost one-third of their days engaging with digital content and frequently engaging on multiple channels, according to [an Adobe survey](#), it's undeniable that developers need a faster and better way to create digitally engaging experiences across channels. Yet despite the appeal of headless for developers, a headless-only CMS may not be the best approach.

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2. Types of CMS.

To help you better understand the choices out there, let's take a brief look at the difference between these CMS architectures:

Coupled CMS

In a coupled or traditional architecture, the content management system, where content is created, is "coupled" with the system that delivers or publishes the content. Blogging platforms such as WordPress or Squarespace are examples of a coupled CMS where the authoring capabilities are part of the live delivery system. The benefit of a coupled system is that it is easy to set up and deploy for a single instance, such as a website, and doesn't require users to have much technical or coding expertise. The drawback, however, is that a coupled infrastructure is more complex to scale, migrate, or integrate, limiting the developer's ability to push content out to third-party applications, such as IoT-connected devices.

Decoupled CMS

A decoupled system separates the authoring and delivery into two disconnected applications and sometimes even different infrastructures. To publish, content is pushed from the underlying content repository to a content delivery infrastructure. This gives the organisation greater flexibility — marketers can create content and developers can focus on coding. The downside of a decoupled approach is that once a delivery system is selected, the publishing capabilities are limited to that system.

Headless CMS

A headless CMS architecture decouples the content and presentation just like a decoupled CMS, but it doesn't limit the publishing capabilities of the CMS. What makes a headless CMS most appealing is that it eliminates the difficulty of reusing content on multiple channels. Developers have the flexibility to use any front-end framework and develop custom experiences for their customers — whether that's for a website, a single-page application, virtual reality, or the Internet of Things.

Yet the capability to easily reuse content in any coding language comes at a cost in both headless and decoupled content management systems. Without the user-friendly structure of templates found in a coupled CMS, non-technical business users, such as creative and marketing teams, cannot easily create and publish content on their own. This can make content creation costlier and slow down the process — limiting how agile companies can be when pushing out content to their customers.

Hybrid CMS

A hybrid CMS combines both a coupled and headless approach to content management. With a hybrid approach, developers have the freedom to build and customise on any front-end framework by using RestFul APIs and Content Services, much as they would in a headless environment. At the same time, a hybrid CMS lets you use templates to author and publish content — just as you would in a coupled CMS architecture.



3. Headless vs Hybrid.

i. Hybrid empowers everyone.

When it comes to selecting a CMS, Paul McMahon², managing director at Accenture Interactive, believes that “the benefits of a hybrid approach come down to getting the best of both worlds. Marketers get to control and optimise the customer experience while developers get to be more efficient and bring application updates to market faster.”

The adoption of headless-only CMS continues to be driven primarily by the needs of technical users who want modern front-end frameworks and microservices architecture without the limitations of traditional CMS. The problem, however, is that while headless CMS empowers developers and architects with greater flexibility and speed, it also disempowers marketers and other business users from managing and optimising content.

And when one party is disempowered, the result can ultimately impact revenue, as one U.S. fashion retailer learned when they took a headless-only CMS approach. At the time, the IT team felt they were losing market share because they couldn't release new features to

their e-commerce site fast enough to keep up with Amazon and other modern retailers. They believed a headless CMS would help them take advantage of agile development, to continuously integrate and deploy updates. They were right on that front — it would.

However, in addition to the e-commerce site, there were marketing landing pages, campaign pages, and other pages that were managed by the marketing team in a traditional CMS. It wasn't until one month from launch that marketing understood how a headless-only approach would limit their ability to manage these pages and impact their capacity to drive traffic to the website. Despite the marketing team's resistance to a headless-only CMS, IT pushed ahead anyway.

“*The benefits of a hybrid approach come down to getting the best of both worlds.*”

Paul McMahon

Managing Director, Accenture Interactive



Empowers everyone.

As a result, the fashion retailer's marketing team turned to outside resources, using their budget to buy one-off campaign pages hosted by agencies so the page could look how they wanted it to look. However, these pages were less effective from an SEO perspective because they were being hosted on other domains. This siloed approach to content creation and delivery ended up negatively impacting the company's ability to drive traffic to their site. And ultimately, IT found themselves needing to move away from a headless-only CMS to a hybrid approach.

In a study of Adobe Experience Manager Sites, a hybrid CMS, IDC³ notes that the most significant driver of value is that the solution "enables individuals and teams responsible for creating and delivering digital content." The report also notes that those using the hybrid solution are also increasing revenue and productivity by reducing the staff time spent managing their content platforms and optimising costs related to content development.

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ii. High-speed Hybrid.

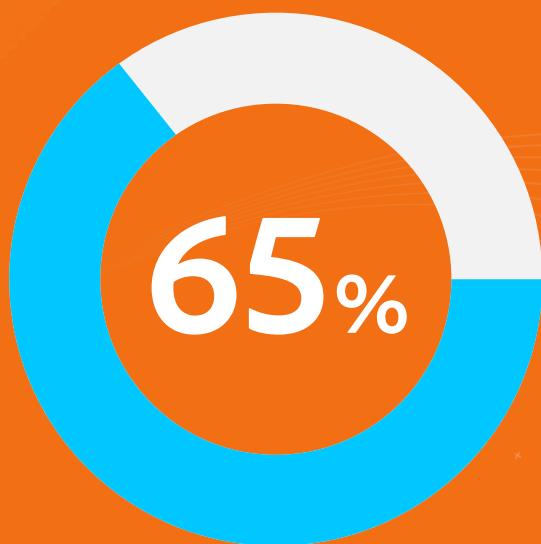
The primary reason companies move to a headless CMS is that it allows developers to use the tools they want, such as React or Angular, to quickly and efficiently create interactive and engaging digital content. But what often gets overlooked in the excitement of headless CMS is the ongoing management and upkeep of content.

In a headless-only scenario, marketers and business users lack the tools to use the CMS, which means the task of updating and managing content will most likely fall on developers — eating into their time and resources. In a hybrid solution, however, marketers and business users also have the tools to manage and update content, freeing up more time for developers to focus on higher-value work.

By giving developers and marketers the appropriate tools for their roles in content creation and management, the customer experience also improves — because everyone can be productive and efficient, not just IT. In a hybrid approach, developers can use the tools they prefer to build specific parts of the website or content experiences using headless CMS, while marketers can still be involved in content creation and editing of headless content through the use of a single-page application (SPA) editor.

Even within a single page, a hybrid solution lets companies break the page down into multiple components — those that are headless and those that are traditional HTML. For example, the home page, banner, promotions, and product recommendations may all be built in React, Angular, or another developer-friendly tool. And on the other side, product and campaign pages that are less dynamic can use traditional HTML and be managed and updated by the marketing team. Content can then be used to populate front-end projects like SPAs or other channels via APIs. Even front-end pages can be hybrid — a mix of headless components and traditional.

Organisations can speed up time to market by distributing the right tools to the right people, so they can manage content productively. According to IDC³ one company noted that it used to take them over an hour to make a minor editorial change to a form. But by using a CMS solution that offered a hybrid approach, they achieved a 65 percent improvement in total staff time.



Hybrid CMS, they achieved a 65 percent improvement in total staff time.



iii. A better foundation, more centralised management.

Another critical aspect of adopting a CMS is that companies want to centralise content management.

However, a headless-CMS often leads to more silos and additional point solutions. In fact, the IDC report³ focused on whether organisations should go headless notes that organisations should “recognise that headless content management may not eliminate the need for a website management solution.” IDC goes on to suggest that organisations will be better served by vendors that offer a modern CMS designed to address the full spectrum of publishing needs, from traditional website publishing to headless use cases. In other words, a hybrid CMS.

“*Recognise that headless content management may not eliminate the need for a website management solution.*”



Melissa Webster

Program VP, Content & Digital Media
Technologies, IDC

While a centralised approach may not be as important during content creation, it becomes essential for ongoing change management. Without a single place or “single truth” where content is updated consistently across channels, organisations risk finding themselves with a mess of different content versions and the potential to accidentally deploy the wrong version.

Having a base architecture that your organisation can build on top of is also critical to giving you more flexibility. In either a headless-only CMS or a traditional CMS environment, your options are limited. But a hybrid CMS lets you create and manage content in whatever way you want — not only today, but also in the future.

Developers can craft unique user experiences that are engaging and easily deployable on multiple channels with the ability to use the frameworks and tools they believe make them most productive — and to change tools in the future if better or newer tools come along. At the same time, marketers can create and manage content, including editing channel-agnostic content or JavaScript using a SPA editor. Then, developers can then reuse this content created or edited by marketers across channels in their front-end projects. Overall, this type of hybrid approach to CMS increases innovation and delivers a better customer experience.

iv. The best experience for everyone.

If your organisation is like most, you're already living in a hybrid environment. But this hybrid environment may be siloed with traditional CMS and headless-only point solutions, including needing separate solutions for translations, email, personalisation, and analytics for a headless-only deployment.

With a hybrid CMS, managing different approaches to content delivery and management is not only possible, it's simple for IT and marketing — and all the capabilities you need, from translations to analytics, come included. Whether you're managing thousands of content changes a day or simply trying to create memorable experiences, giving everyone the option to work with the tools they're most comfortable with is truly the best of both worlds.



v. One piece of content, multiple experiences.

With a hybrid CMS, you can apply content and experience fragments to a broad set of experiences, including the following:

	In-store experiences:	Point of sale and other in-store experiences, such as magic mirrors, electronic shelf labels, virtual shopping windows, and kiosks
	Digital experiences:	Off-site digital experiences such as affiliate networks, partners' marketplaces, and social networks
	Connected devices:	Connected devices such as smartphones and tablets with associated apps
	Internet of Things:	Internet of Things apps in smart cities, smart homes, and fleet updates
	Wearables:	Specialised wearables, such as smart watches and fitness trackers
	Contact:	Call-centre agents, chatbots, and gaming platforms
	Sites:	Web and mobile sites
	Correspondence:	Dynamic forms and customer correspondence
	Forums:	Customer communities such as forums or social media

4. The Adobe difference.

As a leader in Gartner's "Magic Quadrant for Web Content Management," Adobe Experience Manager Sites is a powerful and fully evolved hybrid CMS that allows IT and marketing to create the right content for every channel, device, and customer using tools that are familiar and easy for everyone. With headless and traditional CMS options combined in one solution, marketers and developers can work simultaneously, giving greater control to each, and a better experience to the customer. And with the help of analytics and machine learning, also native to our platform, you have a strong foundation to offer hyper-personalised experiences to every customer, every time.

Rapid content creation for everyone.

To ensure marketers can quickly create content, Adobe Experience Manager offers a unified interface and drag-and-drop tools that allow non-technical users to author an experience for one channel, such as mobile web, as well as create variations for additional channels, like Facebook or Pinterest. As content updates occur, they traverse through all channels to ensure a consistent customer experience. In a hybrid environment, these same experiences can be easily reused by developers for customised experiences like single-page applications, Internet of Things and commerce.

By integrating AEM with its product management system and automating product updates, **Philips**, one of the world's most respected technology and manufacturing companies saved significant time and resources and more than 30,000 product description updates are made daily.

The right content for the right context.

Another critical component of content management that Adobe Experience Manager addresses is ensuring that the content you deliver is right for the channel, device, or customer you're delivering it to. For example, authors should be able to create fragments of content and experiences once and then publish them to any application. At leading financial institution **UBS**, the marketing and communications team was able to detect each employee's location, job profile, and role. Using this information, they could enhance productivity by tailoring news based on what was relevant to specific employees' needs.

Brands are also looking to differentiate themselves and provide value to customers through emerging technologies like 360-degree video and 3D content. Managing this in the same way that you approach copy and static images is a game changer.

Franke, manufacturer of kitchen and food service systems, needed its 150 distributed online writers and editors to be able to manage and orchestrate content such as 3D assets, images, video clips and written content without any special technical expertise. "This is where AEM really excels," says Renato di Rubbo, CMO of Franke Group and Franke Kitchen Systems. For Franke, instead of just working with classic page templates, content authoring is now also based on three-dimensional spaces.



The Adobe difference.

Content driven by intelligence.

To increase the effectiveness of the experiences you deliver, Adobe Experience Manager goes beyond typical hybrid capabilities to intelligently adapt content creation as needed for different channels, devices, or even customers.

For example, smart tags, which use image recognition software, allow you to automatically create keywords for photographs, making it easy to quickly discover, manage, and create content. Finally, using AI-driven content summarisation, you can receive recommendations for content variations based on optimal word count for different devices, such as a wearable device or a tablet — enhancing the personalisation, delivery, and performance of the experiences you create.

Scale your content to scale your business.

As a cloud-hosted hybrid CMS, Adobe Experience Manager Sites can further enhance your agility in creating content by making it quick and easy to scale experiences. This improves the speed and personalisation of content delivered to specific campaigns, sites, or regions.

For UBS, scalability was key, and Experience Manager Sites made this possible by allowing them to reuse many components — buttons, form fields, and graphics — without duplicate effort. Additionally, with a cloud solution, you can easily connect to other Adobe cloud services, allowing you to source content from these services and stream user-generated content — improving not only the speed at which you can deliver the most relevant content, but also allowing you to deepen the personalisation of that content.

Content management made simple enough for everyone.

In their search for the right CMS, these leading companies have discovered that they needed both a headless and a “head-full” approach to content management. By deploying Adobe Experience Manager Sites, they not only get their content out the door faster, they’re also able to deliver and scale the type of highly personalised, custom experiences on any channel or device that drive customer engagement. But deploying a hybrid CMS isn’t just about the competitive edge and rich and fluid experiences it can deliver today, it’s also about being ready for the future — and whatever new devices or channels may appear on the horizon.

Adobe Experience Manager Sites is a powerful and fully evolved hybrid CMS that allows IT and marketing to create the right content for every channel, device, and customer using tools that are familiar and easy for everyone.

[Learn more](#)





To learn more about Adobe Experience Manager please visit:

www.adobe.com/uk/marketing/experience-manager.html

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