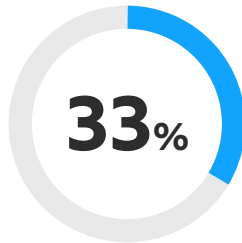




Hybrid CMS: The
best of *both worlds*.

Every day, businesses are managing an enormous amount of content changes—sometimes as high as thousands of content changes per day. With content-driven experiences on the rise, and the subsequent demand to constantly be pushing out new content experiences, the need to find efficient and effective ways to manage content across all channels is an increasingly high priority for digital leaders. Not surprisingly, between 2016 and 2023, the value of the global content management system (CMS) market is expected to increase by \$65,929 million, according to a report by Allied Market Research.

Yet even as the market for CMS grows, the question remains whether a headless, traditional, or hybrid system is best. Traditional web-oriented content management systems, which tie the front- and back-end architecture together, have been the primary method for managing and delivering content experiences historically.



Customers spend almost **one-third** of their days engaging with digital content.

Source: Adobe

But with the need to reach customers through new channels and devices—mobile apps, smart devices, digital assistants, and more—traditional CMS is being disrupted by headless CMS, which decouples the front- and back-end systems. In fact, headless CMS adoption is predicted to double within a year according to a Kentico Software report.

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 better and faster way to create digitally engaging experiences across multiple channels. Yet despite the appeal of headless for developers, a headless-only CMS may not be the best approach.



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

Paul McMahon

Managing Director, Accenture Interactive

By moving to a headless-only CMS, businesses limit the opportunities for marketing to manage and update experiences. This poses a risk to the customer experience and to the business. Research published in the *Harvard Business Review* points out that as many companies move too early to adopt disruptive technologies as move too late. A better strategy for embracing new technology, the article argues, is taking a “Prius Approach,” or a hybrid approach.


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

Empower *everyone.*

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 having the ability to manage and optimize 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, such as being able to continuously integrate and deploy updates. They were right on that front—it would.

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.

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 the way they wanted it to look. However, these pages were less effective from an SEO perspective because they were being hosted on other domains. The 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 by IDC of one hybrid CMS, IDC 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 optimizing costs related to content development.

Fast today, fast *tomorrow*.

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.



A **65 percent improvement** in total staff time by using a CMS solution that offered a hybrid approach.

Source: IDC

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.

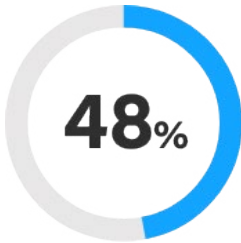
Organizations can speed up time to market by distributing the right tools to the right people, so they can productively manage content. According to IDC, one company noted that it was taking them over an hour to make a minor editorial change to a form. But by using a CMS solution that offered a hybrid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



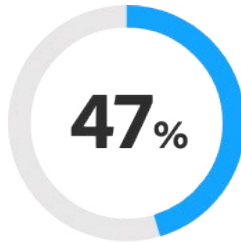
A better foundation, more *centralized management*.

Another critical aspect of adopting a CMS is that companies want to centralize content management. According to Kentico Software, 48 percent responded that their main motivation for headless CMS is centralizing content management in one place, followed by flexibility (47 percent) and building lightweight websites (44 percent).

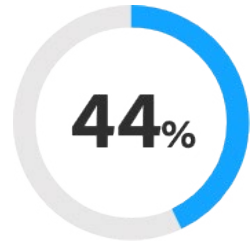
Why companies want headless CMS.



Centralizing content management in one place



Flexibility



Building lightweight websites

Source: Kentico Software

However, a headless CMS often leads to more silos and additional point solutions. In fact, one IDC report focused on whether organizations should go headless notes that organizations should “recognize that headless content management may not eliminate the need for a website management solution.” IDC goes on to suggest that organizations 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.

While a centralized 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, organizations risk finding themselves with a mess of different content versions and the potential to accidentally deploy the wrong version.



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

Melissa Webster

Program VP, Content & Digital Media Technologies, IDC

Having a base architecture that your organization 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.

The best experience for *everyone*.

If your organization 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, personalization, 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.

Not only will this create a higher adoption rate among business users and marketing, it will enable your organization to work as a unified team in delivering highly personalized experiences to your customers quickly and efficiently. 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.

Adobe can help.

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 the tools that are familiar and easy for everyone. With headless and traditional CMS options combined into 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-personalized experiences to every customer, every time.

[Learn more](#)

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