Making the Transition from Conventional Web to Contemporary Digital Experiences

Key advantages of a modern web content management platform

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Beyond a Branded Website

Mobilizing your digital experience

Like many web-savvy organizations, you’ve built a branded online presence that began by publishing marketing materials on a single website. Over time, you added e-commerce, search, and other digital capabilities. And along the way, you adopted a web content management (WCM) system to ensure that your line-of-business teams had the necessary tools to maintain this site on their own.
yet as the business world continues to change, the focus has shifted to a mobile-first world. the number of connected devices, smartphones and tablets has exploded, replacing desktops and laptops as the top means of accessing the internet. this has changed the idea of delivering online experiences, from just catering to target audiences on PCs to marketing to people individually.

in addition to connected devices, businesses deploy mobile apps and enterprise applications in different contexts. for instance, financial advisors use tablet-powered apps to discuss financial objectives with their customers, and then rely on PCs to assess portfolio options and prepare financial reports.

if you want to capture the business value of digital experiences, you must engage your target audiences while they are mobile and as they work at their desks. the mobile revolution is the tipping point for modernizing your branded website.

March 2015 marked the first time the number of mobile-only adult internet users overtook the number of desktop-only internet users in the U.S.

The digital content explosion

Whether your target audience relies on smartphones, tablets, or PCs, omnichannel delivery capabilities are a key requirement for a modern WCM platform. You must be able to easily deliver information that your customers, partners, and employees find relevant—via their preferred communication channels.

Of course, managing web content is not a new challenge. Years ago, marketing and brand managers added this technology to create, maintain, index, and update content on company websites. Many organizations invested in a WCM system to alleviate dependence on IT, so that non-technical staffers could manage websites on their own.

Now that your web channel has grown in importance, you are staking your claim in the digital marketplace. The amount of information you produce is increasing exponentially, and business teams across your organization expect to contribute content.

Branded experiences can include an array of content—from rich media seamlessly blended with text-based articles, to images, sound clips, and video streams. There is a need to integrate information from external enterprise applications, and you must also be able to syndicate content to your channel partners, where your information seamlessly appears on their websites.

The ways you produced content in years past just won’t work anymore. You have to modernize how you manage and distribute content across multiple devices and business situations.
Keeping up with the speed of digital business

The content explosion and the mobile revolution both highlight a pressing challenge, which is that the relentless focus on digital experiences can test the capabilities of a traditional WCM system. This means that to remain competitive in the digital age, your WCM platform must:

- Capture diverse audiences with amazing branded experiences
- Personalize experiences to compete in the attention economy
- Continuously test alternatives, incorporate updates, and optimize results

So, if managing content effectively and efficiently is only one part of the story, what do you have to do to deliver a modern digital experience?

You must be able to combine access to content with automatic alerts. Mobile audiences in particular, expect to receive notifications and content snippets about items of immediate interest. This means you’ll want to focus on personalization while you’re optimizing results.

Gartner estimates that by the end of 2017, more than 90% of organizations claiming success at digitalization will regard their WCM software as a mission-critical component of that success.

Personalization
With so much content readily available, you must be able to personalize what your target audience receives, based on their current context. Pay attention to three aspects:

1. **Explicit criteria**—where predefined factors based on personal profiles and other sources lead to specific next steps within a process
2. **Implicit criteria**—based on background information, prior activities, and other inferred factors that influence results
3. **Mobile-specific criteria**—such as location, direction, acceleration, and other data generated by on-device sensors

A contemporary content platform must be able to trigger personalized experiences based on all of these factors.

Optimize Results
Your ability to measure and monitor the success of digital experiences is key to knowing where to make changes and improvements. Are your customers, partners, and employees receiving the information they expect? Can you continuously collect data about the things that matter most for delivering great experiences?

At the same time, you'll want to frequently update your content delivery capabilities based on data about your audiences' experiences. To keep up with the speed of digital business, it is important to rapidly turn data-driven insights into profitable and productive results.
Context Matters when Supporting Business Travelers

When travelers browse a hotel site from their PCs during the workday or from their tablets late at night, they are most likely looking to make reservations. They automatically experience a shopping context. When they access the same site from an airport using their smartphones, these travelers probably want to know about their current bookings and receive automatic alerts about changes to their itineraries. They are in a traveling context.

In this scenario, a travel agency can optimize its results by identifying key metrics and tracking travelers’ experiences. But these numbers alone, while necessary, are not sufficient. The agency must also be prepared to rapidly test alternatives and refine the various experiences.
Digital transformation

Take stock of your current WCM system as you assess your opportunities for digital transformation. You have invested substantial time and money to build out a branded website, so you have the foundation for launching next-generation digital experiences.

But you’ll want to carefully consider next steps. Determine where your current environment is useful and profitable. At the same time, identify the barriers to success. As you do, consider the outcomes for both people and processes.

Be sure to develop a solid digital transformation strategy for both mobile apps and PC-based experiences. Focus on the results where you are able to enhance productivity, improve profitability, reduce risks, and transform the ways work gets done.
A Digital Transformation Checklist

As you consider the flow of content across your organization:

• Review high-value processes that support your brand
• Identify opportunities to simplify processes and remove outdated steps
• Investigate opportunities to integrate content from third-party sources to deliver seamless digital experiences
• Determine where streamlined activities can successfully meet the demands for brand consistency and content delivery
• Assess the impact of mobile apps where customers, partners, and employees access content in the field and “on-the-go”

Of course, your organization has its own unique capabilities and issues. Zero in on these issues and examine where the right content can make a difference.
The Business Benefits of a Modern WCM Platform
Profiting from digital experiences

Success in the digital economy boils down to managing content for competitive advantage. A modern content platform unlocks valuable opportunities and adapts to continuously changing customer expectations and business imperatives. And while different firms face different challenges, there are many common themes for omnichannel content delivery, personalization, findability, and optimized performance. When done right, modern approaches for managing content can create profitable branded offerings and improve business results.
Modernizing a Global Travel Business

A global travel business transformed a static, transactional website into several engaging, tailored digital experiences that made sure travelers got the content they needed when they needed it. An eight-person marketing team, working from several locations around the world, now manages the content for more than 18,000 web pages (published in 15 languages). The team easily adds hundreds of new items each week to the content collection.

For this firm, the focus on digital experience leads to enhanced customer loyalty and rising web channel revenues—a clear case that a modern WCM platform delivers business value.
Distributing content across multiple channels

Outside-In Flexibility
A modern WCM platform enables you to design and deliver digital experiences “from the outside in.” You can begin by focusing on your target audiences and the kinds of experiences they expect. Then, identify how individuals are going to access the information they need.

- Sometimes they are looking for content on branded websites, using either a full-screen browser or a mobile device.
- Other times, they are engaged in particular tasks and need information snippets—specific bits of content delivered in predefined business contexts—to complete their request.

A modern content platform provides the flexibility to deliver as much or as little information as needed, and blends both push and pull experiences.
Experiencing an Energy Company through Branded Connections

A European energy company needed to build out its direct-to-consumer capabilities based on the visitor’s goals.

When prospects sought information online, they were most likely in the midst of a shopping experience. They looked for rate-related information and other things that influence initial buying decisions. Customers on the other hand, expected personalized and targeted content, including energy conservation tips, a troubleshooting guide for solar arrays, and paperless correspondence options about rate changes.

Customers experience this company’s brand through its digital connections. Through up-front personalization, the firm delivers separate digital experiences for prospects and customers.
Coordinating development

To coordinate the development of your digital experiences, be sure to include all key company stakeholders in the design and development processes.

- Design teams, both within your own organization and at external agencies, can create the branded environments.
- Once you are satisfied with the particular applications, you can hand them off to your line-of-business staffers, to maintain them on an on-going basis.

No longer do IT specialists need to remain involved in the day-to-day operations of web content management. With a modern content management platform in place, you can easily manage the transition from a branding agency to the live and fully functioning digital experience.

Syndicating and aggregating content through APIs

You maintain relationships through the content you syndicate to your business partners and source from third parties. A modern content platform becomes the hub for distributing content to, and accessing content from, these disparate sources.

You can easily push both content, and the categories that describe it, to your business partners, where they can redistribute your information for their own purposes.

You may be:

- A manufacturer developing product information for use by e-commerce sites
- A travel agency syndicating vacation-related information to a network of travel-related websites
- A multimedia producer developing the branded visual assets to be used for digital signage on billboards, elevators, and other display screens

Once you define the types and frequency of content to be syndicated, you can rely on your content platform to publish the information on a predictable schedule.

Moreover, you can aggregate content from external sources. Some of this information comes from remote publishers. You are simply incorporating their content streams as syndicated sources and repurposing the information to meet your needs. Some of this information comes from external enterprise applications. You are querying remote databases and then incorporating the results into your digital environment. By leveraging the APIs from Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms, you can even capture content from social streams and repurpose the information feeds to support your branded experiences.
Personalized content delivery

With a modern WCM platform, you can personalize the content you deliver to multiple channels. Be prepared to rely on both explicit and implicit criteria for personalization and targeting.

Explicit criteria can include registration profiles, business rules, and other specific factors that channel content delivery. Consider the particular criteria you use to define your target audiences and your product offerings.

Implicit criteria can include inferences based on factors within a digital environment. You should consider location, patterns of activities prior to a specific request, the occurrence of particular words and phrases, or other digital events that signal intent. Capture data from mobile apps and use it to refine the implicit criteria for personalized content delivery.

Be sure to blend both proactive alerts and tailored queries to deliver branded digital experiences.

Content findability and searching

A modern content platform supports unparalleled content findability and interactive searching for all types of content. You can rapidly find relevant items both:

- Retrospectively, when content is stored within a large repository
- Proactively, when it is newly produced and flowing through real-time information streams

You can limit queries to content repositories within an enterprise or extend queries to multiple repositories outside an organization. You can group the result sets by facets or arrange them hierarchically by terms within a predefined taxonomy. As far as your target audience is concerned, findability and searching becomes an integral part of the total digital experience.
Multiple Modes to Search for and Find Content

A modern content platform supports the wide range of information retrieval techniques that are appropriate for various situations.

- Full-text retrieval is based on predefined words and phrases and/or interpretations about the meaning of particular queries, using advanced linguistic analysis.
- Visual search capabilities are based either on metadata describing images within a collection or on automatic recognition of specific objects (e.g., faces, scenes, or color patterns) within an image collection.
- Rich media searching of audio and video streams can identify key frames, words, and sounds associated with streaming images.
Optimizing for design decisions and performance

With a modern WCM platform, you can assess and monitor performance, and optimize design decisions about the best ways to produce digital experiences.

As a non-technical end-user, you can easily set up and test various digital branding alternatives. This may be something as straightforward as the organization of items on a web page or the sequence of responses to queries within a mobile app. Using testing tools that are integrated with the content platform, you can easily collect data about different experiences and rapidly analyze the results.

Data drives decision making. Focus on optimizing the best way to present a branded experience and continually refine the experience in light of analysis about business performance.
Creating and managing content for branded experiences

A modern WCM platform maintains content for your digital environment—spanning both websites and mobile apps. But the underlying information is constantly changing. Many people across your organization are adding and updating content. Knowing this, you will want:

- Content management capabilities that support your editorial processes for creating, reviewing, and approving new items
- Technology that helps you maintain a single source of truth for your firm’s branded experiences

Rely on a flexible content management framework, one that is relevant to the business needs of your organization. Maintain sufficiently centralized or decentralized editorial management processes that adapt to the culture of your organization. In addition, have the capabilities to easily integrate feeds from external applications and capture content from multiple mobile devices, sensors, and social channels.

In short, a modern WCM platform ensures that you have the content-related resources and underlying technologies in place to compete effectively in the digital economy.
Channeling Digital Experiences
A roadmap for modernization

Beyond current investments

To succeed in the digital age, you must progress from simply publishing pages on your website to producing branded experiences across all kinds of mobile and tethered devices. A modern WCM platform provides the tools and technologies for delivering these experiences. Yet you still have to create the experiences and produce the content that animates them.

How do you design the digital experiences and deploy the enabling technologies? How should you leverage your current website investments and optimize your results? Here is a roadmap for modernization to help you get started.
How an Insurance Company Personalizes Safety Information

Consider the case of an insurance company, publishing safety information around slip, trip, and fall prevention. The firm offers generalized advice and tips over the web, when workers are sitting at their desks. Its website also delivers extensive information about safety prevention, education, and training programs.

When workers are at a job site and want to glance at their smartphones for tips about particular hazards, the firm produces pithy snippets. The mobile app personalizes the safety advice to the location, workers’ tasks, and other relevant factors. The content is well-indexed and the mobile app automatically delivers the essential information tailored to workers and their specific work situations.
Map customer journeys

Begin by mapping your customers’ journeys. Start with the outcomes; the branded results that your target audiences expect. Describe the steps for accomplishing them. Remember that you have a history of building your brand on first- and second-generation websites. Map your customer journeys like this:

• Identify high value digital moments, where having access to just the right information communicates facts and insights, conveys impressions and feelings, and empowers actions. These are moments where people within the target audiences are engaged with content.
• List all of the key tasks and activities that people need to perform to support these moments.
• Describe the underlying business processes that you have in place to support these tasks and activities.
• Determine where reengineered processes may substantially improve particular tasks.

Next, identify what is working and what needs to be fixed. Chart the differences between these potential digital experiences and what you are delivering with your current WCM system. Then identify the content needed to produce these next-generation digital experiences.

As you describe the kinds of content required, assess the impact of mobility on digital experiences. Identify where situational awareness, location, time, and other data points will enhance the overall results. Sometimes, your audience is tethered to fixed locations and focusing on particular tasks. Other times, they are in the field, juggling disparate activities. Place and situation often matter. Personalization and content targeting can have a big impact, particularly when end-users are mobile. As part of your assessment, determine where delivering ‘content in context’ enhances your customers’ journeys.
Identify the IT capabilities that support digital experiences

Once you have defined these high-value digital moments and described the content and processes that produce them, work with your IT group to identify the enabling technologies. Be sure to align business objectives with technology requirements.

Assess your back-end platform capabilities from both a business and a technical perspective. This includes your ability to:

- Manage web content, both as self-contained web pages and as discrete content snippets
- Acquire, store, protect, and deliver digital assets—the valuable images, sounds, and videos that are often monetized
- Integrate with external applications through open APIs

At the same time, consider your front-end capabilities for both PCs and mobile devices. Recognize how hardware, software, and communications capabilities are continuously evolving. Work with your IT group to develop a roadmap for the business benefits of different digital device endpoints.

Be sure to plan for omnichannel delivery, weaving together tethered workplaces that rely on PCs with experiences delivered through mobile devices. Focus on delivering the content for task-oriented solutions.
Plan for enabling technologies to fill identified gaps

With collaboration between your IT group and your line-of-business teams in place, you can catalogue business requirements and technical capabilities for your branded digital experiences. You can then identify the gaps in your enabling content technologies and business processes, and develop plans to fill them.

There are several ways to modernize your content management and delivery capabilities. As a starting point, take stock of your current content platform and how you are producing digital experiences.

- Investigate the capabilities of the installed version of your platform and compare it to the latest updates that you already license. If you’ve had a WCM system in place for several years, deploying the most recent version may go a long way to filling the identified gaps.
- Assess integration capabilities for accessing web services from external applications over the internet.
- Consider different ways for delivering mobile content to support digital experiences in the field, when people are using smartphones and tablets.

As part of this assessment, be sure to consider IT services capabilities, including those for cloud deployments and mobile app development. Your content platform should include partnerships with key service and support organizations.
When Business Transformation Drives Content Modernization
Raise the bar with alternative platforms

Consider investments in alternatives to your current platform that will substantially modernize your content delivery capabilities and raise the bar on your digital experiences. These include:

- Services that encapsulate existing content repositories and leverage current investments
- Innovative tools, technologies, and content management capabilities that are not provided by your current content platform

Once you have identified the essential gaps and assessed your alternatives, acquiring new technologies is often the best way to modernize your content platform and deliver the branded digital experiences your target audiences expect. Modest strategic investments can have a large multiplier effect on your overall environment.

Invariably, content platform modernization is going to involve additional IT investments. But there is one caveat that comes from mapping your customer journeys: you should pay particular attention to your overall business environment. Remember that technology for technology’s sake is not the best answer. Innovative content technologies are the enablers for business transformation, not the solutions in their own right. When it comes to a smart investment strategy for digital experiences, make sure that your business goals are driving your technology decisions.
Get in touch

If you found the information in this guide helpful, let us know. If you found it lacking, we want to hear from you, too. And if you want to learn more about how we can help you, definitely get in touch!

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