

Digital experience teams — including content creators, designers, developers, and IT — need a strong content management system (CMS) to help them collaborate and manage the many processes involved in creating and delivering superior digital experiences.

## Choosing a Content Management System to Meet Today's Digital Experience Challenges

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**Questions posed by:** WordPress VIP

**Answers by:** Marci Maddox, Research Director, Enterprise Content Strategies

### Q. What are some of the big-picture trends IDC is seeing in its research into customer experience?

**A.** Nearly every organization we speak with these days — whether manufacturer, retailer, financial services company, nonprofit, healthcare provider, or participant in some other industry segment — tells us that improving the customer experience is a top company priority. In fact, many organizations tell us that excellence in customer experience is a key component of their competitive strategy.

These organizations see a direct connection between the quality of the customer experience and customer lifetime value (CLV) and are putting the customer at the center of their strategy — a clear acknowledgment that, today, the customer is in control. Organizations are designing the end-to-end customer journey around the customer's goals, needs, desires, and preferences — and that's across all customer touch points, both physical and digital, including marketing and customer acquisition, sales and commerce, and service and support.

As the customer experience increasingly unfolds via digital channels, it's no surprise that organizations are investing heavily in digital experience software and staff. According to IDC's most recent *Digital Experience Survey*, 90% of respondents said their budgets for digital experience grew again in 2019 (none saw a decrease). The vast majority (73%) said their digital experience spend is tied to a strategic initiative — either a digital transformation (DX) or a customer experience initiative.

At IDC, we speak quite a bit about the idea of "empathy at scale," which means delivering a customer experience that feels personal and brings in the "human touch" — even when the customer experience is a digital experience. Achieving this requires, first and foremost, a very good understanding of the organization's customers. Then, it's a matter of execution — delivering the right content at the right time to the particular touch point the customer happens to be using.

## Q. What are the biggest challenges for today's digital experience teams?

**A.** For one thing, customer expectations keep rising. They are continually reset by the last great digital experience the customer had — regardless of who provided it. Digital experience teams are under pressure to make experiences more engaging and easier to use via new kinds of rich, immersive content and new modes of user interaction. There is a constant pressure to innovate. At the same time, many teams are under pressure to deliver digital experiences more quickly to shorten time to revenue for new product launches or respond in a timely way to competitive pressures.

Responding quickly to these changing digital dynamics requires a modular architecture that allows volumes of content to be created or curated from a variety of sources. Teams are looking for unique, authentic content that resonates with target demographics, and this is driving spend on solutions that harvest, curate, and even clear the rights to user-generated content. In social marketing, surveys, polls, or accessing data from ecommerce or external systems, speed is critical for freshness, relevance, and the ability to capitalize on breaking news. There is a tremendous need for digital experience teams to craft a compelling and visual story that resonates with the consumer/prospect and then launch their project quickly and efficiently via a user-friendly modular platform.

The next step in content delivery is to consider that the number of channels and devices that digital experience teams must support continues to grow. Many organizations tell us they must support 15–20 different channels, including websites, social channels, mobile applications, and even Internet of Things (IoT) devices such as wearables and digital signs. Each channel has its own "vernacular" and its own role in the customer journey. It's critical to "speak" in the channel vernacular. That means teams must deliver experiences that are not only responsive but also channel specific and at the same time deliver a consistent brand experience across the end-to-end customer journey.

Further, digital experience teams consist of many contributors and stakeholders who have different skill sets and play different roles — including content creators, designers, developers, and IT. Teams need a strong content management system (CMS) to help them collaborate and manage the many processes involved in creating and delivering digital experiences. Most importantly, they need a robust CMS that empowers all their content creators to create, manage, and publish content without relying on IT — parallel scaling of content creation such that anyone can create content as needed and content owners can work independently of one another.

## Q. We are hearing quite a bit of discussion around best-of-breed DX solutions versus single-vendor marketing clouds. What are your thoughts?

**A.** On one hand, we're in an era of tremendous innovation and organizations want to take advantage of new solutions that can help them differentiate the digital experiences they create. No one vendor does it all, and organizations don't want to be locked in and risk falling behind.

On the other hand, organizations want to spend more of their time creating, managing, and publishing great digital experiences and less time integrating a bunch of disparate solutions via custom code that they'll have to maintain forever.

IDC believes a digital experience solution that has a broad ecosystem of third-party plug-ins and extensions gives organizations maximum choice and flexibility in the following ways:

- » Solutions that are pluggable make it possible, with just a few clicks, to add in ecommerce and marketing automation, prebuilt integrations to enterprise applications, video players, and everything else the digital experience team might need without requiring extra effort and incurring additional costs for integration and without needing to create/maintain custom code.
- » Solutions built on industry standards that attract a large pool of developers give teams a future-proof system, and they immediately benefit from the power of the ecosystem. The ecosystem is even better when the digital experience vendor offers a marketplace of trusted extensions, with ratings and reviews and strong search capabilities.

## Q. What advice can you offer to organizations looking to improve their digital experience management capabilities?

**A.** Great content management systems are the heart of any digital experience management system. Given the many challenges that digital experience teams face in supporting the growing number of different channels and devices, and the constant pressures to innovate, putting in place a strong CMS is essential.

Organizations need to choose a solution that supports and helps orchestrate the efforts of the many different contributors and stakeholders who play a role in the creation, management, and publishing of digital experiences. These roles include the following:

- » **Content authors** who create blogs, merchandizing pages, mobile application experiences, and more. Some of these authors are full-time members of the digital experience team, and their role is to create compelling brand and product content. Others are part-time contributors from corporate communications, investor relations, human resources, customer support, and other departments. Today, everyone is a publisher. Organizations should choose a solution that marketers and other nontechnical business users can use easily — a solution that truly democratizes content.
- » **Designers** who are responsible for branding and creating attractive, reusable templates, and design elements. A robust solution should allow designers, depending on their technical savvy, to work in either a user-friendly graphical user interface (GUI) or coding environment to build themes that support native third-party content, such as videos or maps, to their site.
- » **Developers** who play a key role in building web and native application experiences. Organizations should choose a solution that supports the tools and frameworks that web developers use, such as JavaScript, React.js, Vue.js, so they are maximally productive and can deliver new applications quickly.

- » **IT administrators** who are responsible for performance, scalability, and security. Ideally, organizations should choose a solution that substantially relieves IT of complex configuration, capacity planning, and application management tasks.
- » **Heads of digital** who lead the strategy and oversight of a company's digital properties. These people are likely to recommend a modern platform to replace custom applications or disconnected digital properties. The optimum solution would minimize internal resourcing/costs, increase workflow efficiency, and improve time to market.

Further, organizations should choose a vendor with critical mass and strong market momentum. The market for DX solutions is consolidating as leaders pull away from the pack. Organizations should look for a vendor with a track record of growth, innovation, and proven ability to anticipate and meet user needs. A vendor offering an open, standards-based solution ensures there will be a large talent pool to draw from.

## About the Analyst



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Marci Maddox is Research Director for IDC's Enterprise Content Strategies program, responsible for content workflow and content technologies research. Marci's core research coverage includes the evolution of enterprise content, customer communications, content sharing and collaboration, esignature, forms, and capture solutions.

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