

# Configuring a Future- Ready Content Platform

# How to Future-Proof Your Content

To future-proof something is to design or strategically plan it, ensuring its relevance, effectiveness, and adaptability in the face of future changes, challenges, and advancements. It requires strategic foresight into potential development, technologies, or methods to withstand or take advantage of future opportunities.

In the context of content platforms and content management systems, future-proofing refers to designing and implementing digital experiences to ensure longevity, adaptability, and scalability as technology and user needs evolve.

In this playbook, we'll explore a range of strategies and best practices for future-proofing your content platform based on insights from Jon Voigt, CEO and Founder, and Joel Varty, CTO of Agility.

From configuring for scalability to leveraging emerging technologies, these strategies can help you stay ahead of the curve and ensure the long-term success of your content.

# **Content, Content Management, and Content Platforms**

Content, content management, and content platforms play distinct but interconnected roles in the digital landscape.

Content serves as the foundation of digital experiences. It encompasses information, data, and media that are shared through various channels.

To effectively harness the power of content, organizations rely on content management. Content management encompasses the entire lifecycle of content, from creation and editing to collaboration, version control, and distribution. A robust content management system (CMS) streamlines these tasks, ensuring that content is managed efficiently, consistently, and in a structured manner.

This is where content platforms, such as Agility, come into play. Content platforms are comprehensive software solutions designed to facilitate content management and delivery. They provide organizations with a suite of tools and functionalities to create, manage, and publish content effectively; such as content creation and editing interfaces, content organization and categorization, workflow management, publishing and distribution capabilities, user management, and analytics integration.



# Why Flexibility and Future-Proofing Should Be Your Top Priority

## 1 Things are constantly changing

While we may have well-defined plans and initiatives for the next few years, it's crucial to recognize that numerous unknown factors can disrupt them. As your content model expands, having a flexible system saves you time, reduces stress, and ensures that you can seamlessly incorporate new elements without disrupting the existing setup.

## 2 Business goals change

Business goals provide a direction and focus for the organization, but it's essential to recognize that achieving goals requires adjustments and flexibility. Things like economic shifts, emerging technologies, consumer preferences, and global events, among others can all play a role. These conditions are often beyond the control of any single organization. To stay competitive and relevant, businesses must be prepared to pivot, adjust strategies, and respond quickly to changing market dynamics.



# Top 10 Future-Proof Tips

## 1 Avoid Rich Text

Instead of relying on rich text, which can be difficult to manage and can create compatibility issues with different devices and platforms, consider using structured data formats such as Markdown or XML.

Focus on modular, component-based design instead. You could break down your content platform into smaller, more modular components, each with its well-defined interface. This allows for easier modification and updating of individual components as needed, without disrupting the entire platform.

### ● Multi-field approach

To future-proof your content platform, adopting a multi-field approach in structuring your content is essential.

This approach allows for greater flexibility and reusability of elements. Instead of relying solely on a single rich text field, consider breaking the content into separate fields for headings, paragraphs, call-to-actions, images, and other relevant components.

### ● Data types

Utilizing definitive data types can enhance self-description and enable seamless data conversions. By assigning specific data types that accurately represent the nature of the content, you provide additional context and clarity.

### ● Validation

Content validation plays a vital role in ensuring the accuracy and integrity of your content platform. By implementing validation mechanisms, you can verify that the content aligns with design standards and the overall content strategy. Validation also safeguards against errors and inconsistencies during content creation and modification.

### ● Future-proof

Future-proofing your content involves ensuring its longevity and adaptability across various design systems and channels. By separating the content from specific design elements, like HTML fields within the rich text, you enable its versatility and reusability. This approach allows you to utilize the power of rich text formatting while maintaining the flexibility to present the content differently in different contexts or on various screens such as mobile apps, smart TVs, and more.

## 2 Use High-Quality Images With CDN Resizing

High-quality images can enhance the user experience and engagement on your content platform but also slow down page load times. To future-proof your platform, use content delivery networks (CDNs) to deliver images.

CDN resizing optimizes images for different devices and screen sizes, reducing the amount of data that needs to be transferred over the network. This can improve page load times and overall performance, leading to a better user experience and increased engagement. Use a CDN to resize and crop your images, allowing them to be used on more surfaces, even future ones.

### ● Upload High-Quality Images

Uploading high-quality images and utilizing an asset repository can significantly contribute to future-proofing your content. You can generate and output multiple sizes and formats tailored to specific design requirements and usage scenarios by starting with high-resolution images.

### ● Output Multiple Sizes and Formats

If you upload high-quality images into your content and your asset repository, then Agility can output multiple sizes and formats of that image so that it can be used in all the places that we know it needs to be used in your design.

### 3 Adding New Fields

Adding new fields to your content platform is a crucial aspect of future-proofing. As your platform evolves, you may need to add new types of content or new metadata fields to support changing user needs and content formats.

When adding new fields, focus on simplicity and usability. Avoid creating overly complex or redundant fields that may confuse users or create unnecessary overhead. Use clear, concise labels and descriptions for new fields, and provide clear guidance on how they should be used.

#### ● Content Models Should Evolve

Embracing the evolution of content models is a crucial aspect of future-proofing your content architecture. By designing your architecture with the understanding that it will change and expand over time, you can create a foundation that accommodates future needs and enhancements. One effective approach is to group related fields within sub-tabs or subgroups in your content model. This allows for better organization and easier navigation within the content management system. Even if initially a tab or section may have only a few fields, anticipating future expansions and additions can help avoid the need for extensive restructuring later on.

- **ContentOps is not DevOps**

ContentOps and DevOps are distinct concepts with different focuses and goals. While DevOps primarily revolves around developing and deploying code, contentOps specifically addresses the operational aspects of managing and publishing content within a content management system (CMS) or content platform. It's important to recognize that content is not code and should be treated differently regarding workflow and processes.

- **Assume values could be empty**

Developers need to consider the possibility of empty values in new fields. In content management, wherein the content is frequently moved or synchronized from various sources, it's practical to assume that new fields may not have values initially. By incorporating this assumption into the development process, developers can write code that handles empty values gracefully, ensuring the system remains flexible and robust.

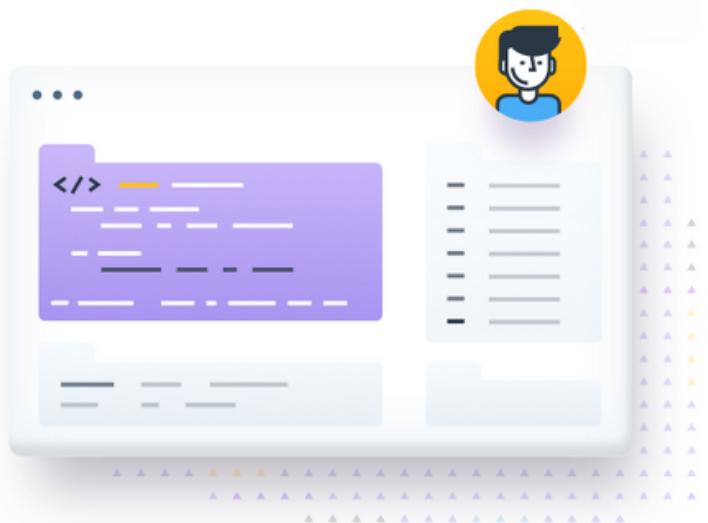
- **Test then deploy**

The "Test Then Deploy" principle emphasizes the importance of thorough testing before deploying new code or content changes into a production environment. This practice ensures that potential issues or bugs are identified and addressed before impacting the live system or end-users.

## 4 Deleting Fields

Deleting fields from your content platform is also an important stage of future-proofing, as it helps to streamline and optimize your platform as it evolves. However, it's important to approach field deletion carefully to avoid unintended consequences.

When deleting a field, update any related code or scripts that may reference the field. This will help to prevent errors or issues when the code is executed.



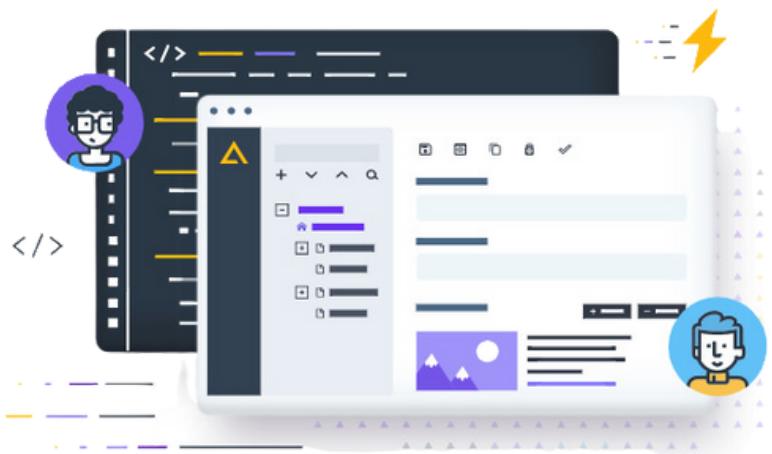
## 5 Relating Content

Relating content is a key aspect of future-proofing your content platform, as it can improve your content's discoverability, relevance, and value. When content is related, it can be more easily surfaced and recommended to users, increasing engagement and driving retention.

Use metadata fields to tag content with relevant related information. This may include tags, categories, or custom fields that describe the relationships between pieces of content.

### ● Categorization made easy

Streamlining the categorization process is vital for future-proofing your content platform as it enables easy creation and management of interconnected lists, such as categories. Simplifying the categorization workflow improves content organization, enhances navigation, and promotes consistency across the platform.

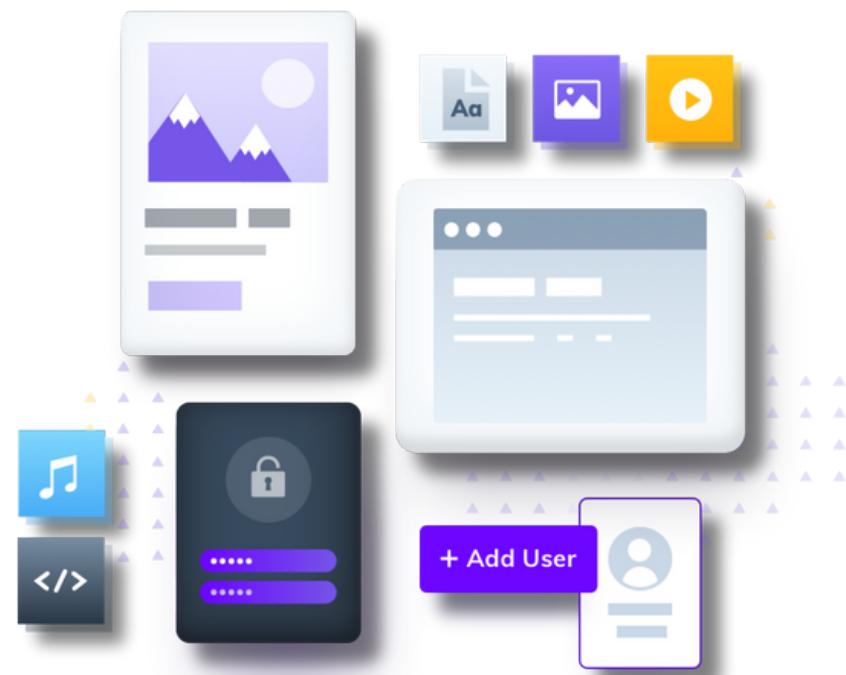


## ● A blueprint for personalization

Creating a blueprint for allows you to dynamically tailor content to specific segments and user preferences. As your business evolves and new user segments emerge, you can expand your categorization and tagging system to accommodate these changes, ensuring your content remains relevant and valuable to your audience.

## ● Start simple, expand slowly

When future-proofing your content platform, it's often wise to start with a simple and manageable approach and gradually expand as needed. Rather than attempting to implement an extensive and complex solution right from the start, starting simple allows you to gain insights, test strategies, and make informed decisions for future expansion.



## 6 Adding Locales

Adding locales can enable your platform to serve a global audience with different language and cultural content requirements.

Before adding locales, define your strategy for supporting different languages and cultures. This may include selecting the languages and locales you want to support, determining how to handle language-specific content and formatting, and establishing processes for localization.

### ● Start small

Starting small is a wise approach when future-proofing your content platform, particularly when considering expansion to multiple locales or regions. Initially launching with a limited number of locales, you can effectively assess the feasibility and efficiency of your infrastructure and content management processes. This allows you to validate the scalability of your systems and gauge the impact of content translation on your team's workload. By starting small, you can establish a solid foundation and gain valuable insights to inform future expansion.

## ● Auto vs human translation

One important decision to make when expanding to new locales is whether to use automated translation or human translation. Automated translation can be faster but may not produce high-quality results; on the other hand, human translation is more accurate but comes with more overhead and time considerations. As you configure your content platform, you can experiment with different translation methods and adjust based on the results as needed.

## ● Bulk vs on-demand

When expanding your content platform to support multiple languages, it's important to consider how you handle content additions. One approach is bulk adding. This is where you import a list of articles in one language and then repeat the process for other languages. However, ensuring that these imported articles are linked across languages is crucial. Without establishing these relationships, maintaining and managing your content effectively can become challenging.

## 7 Managing Large Lists

Managing large lists is an important aspect of future-proofing your content platform. It can help ensure your platform remains efficient, scalable, and user-friendly as your content library grows.

You can use caching to store frequently accessed data in memory or disk, reducing the need to query the database or file system for each request. Consider the scale of your content as soon as possible to help your team be successful in the future as it grows.

### ● Single list

While a single list can be suitable for smaller amounts of content, it may be necessary to split large lists into multiple segments. With platforms like Agility, you can easily create additional lists using the same content model. These segmented lists can be logically separated based on date, category, or any other relevant segmentation.



## 8 Design Content vs Reusable Content

When it comes to future-proofing your content platform, it's important to distinguish between design content and reusable content.

Design content includes elements that are unique to each piece of content and do not lend themselves to reuse like branding, layout, and visual design. Reusable content, on the other hand, includes elements such as text, images, and media, which can be used across multiple pieces of content.

For both, design and reusable, it's also important to understand how to utilize them to create great user experiences, streamline your process, and promote reusable and maintainable content.

### ● Reusable Content

- Use content management systems to store and manage reusable content, making it easy to find and reuse across multiple pieces of content.
- Ensure your reusable content is well-organized and tagged with relevant metadata to make it easy to find and use.
- Use tools and services that enable content reuse, such as content templates or modular content structures.

## 9 Putting Code in Your Content

Putting code in your content can be a useful way to provide technical explanations, tutorials, or examples for your users. However, it's important to approach this practice with care to ensure that your content remains accessible, usable, and future-proofed. Provide context and explanation for your code to help users understand its purpose and how it fits into the broader content.

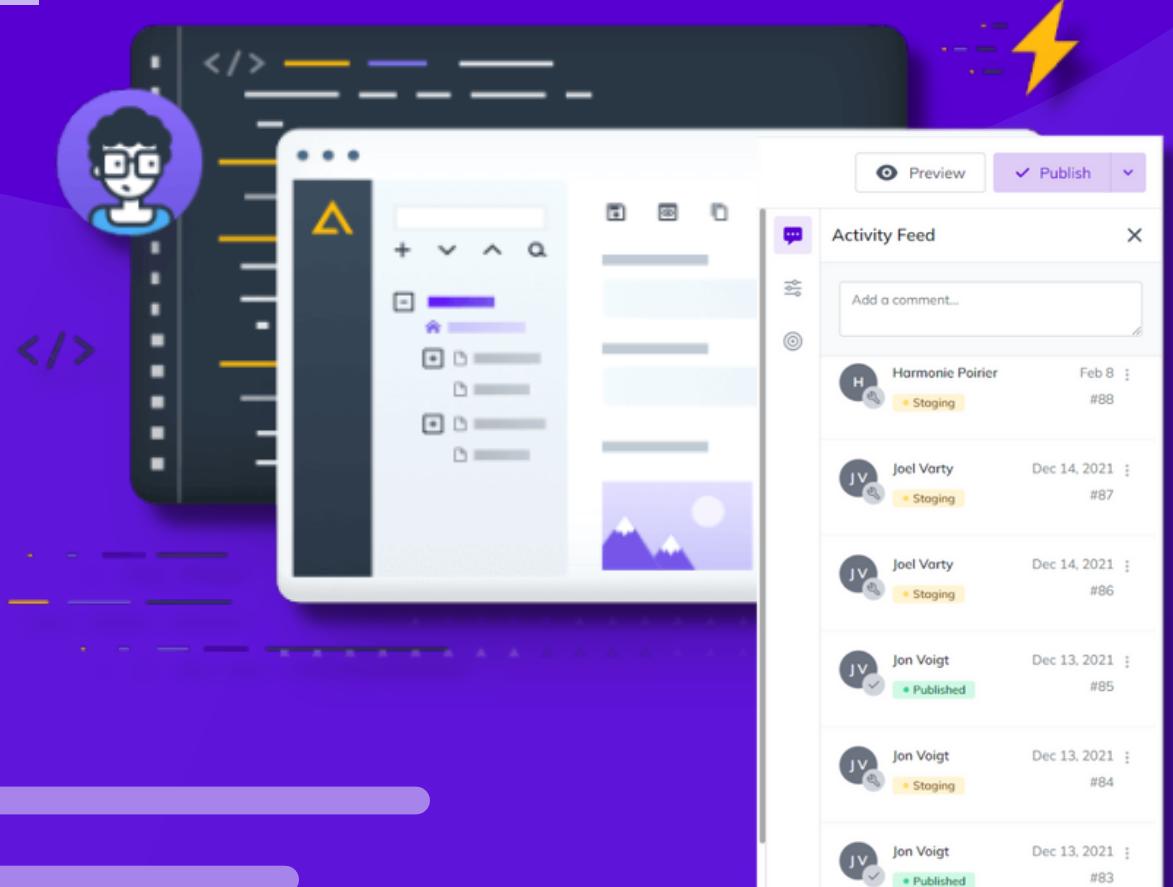
## 10 Make Your Content Configurable

Making your content configurable is an important way to future-proof your content platform, as it allows your users to tailor the content to their specific needs and preferences.

A good idea is to use APIs to integrate your content with other platforms or tools, allowing users to access and use your content in new and innovative ways.

# Supercharge Your Content Architecture With Agility

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