How to Choose an Enterprise Ready Content Platform

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It's that time again when you need to consider if your CMS is up to the challenge of managing all of the content for your brand or group of brands.
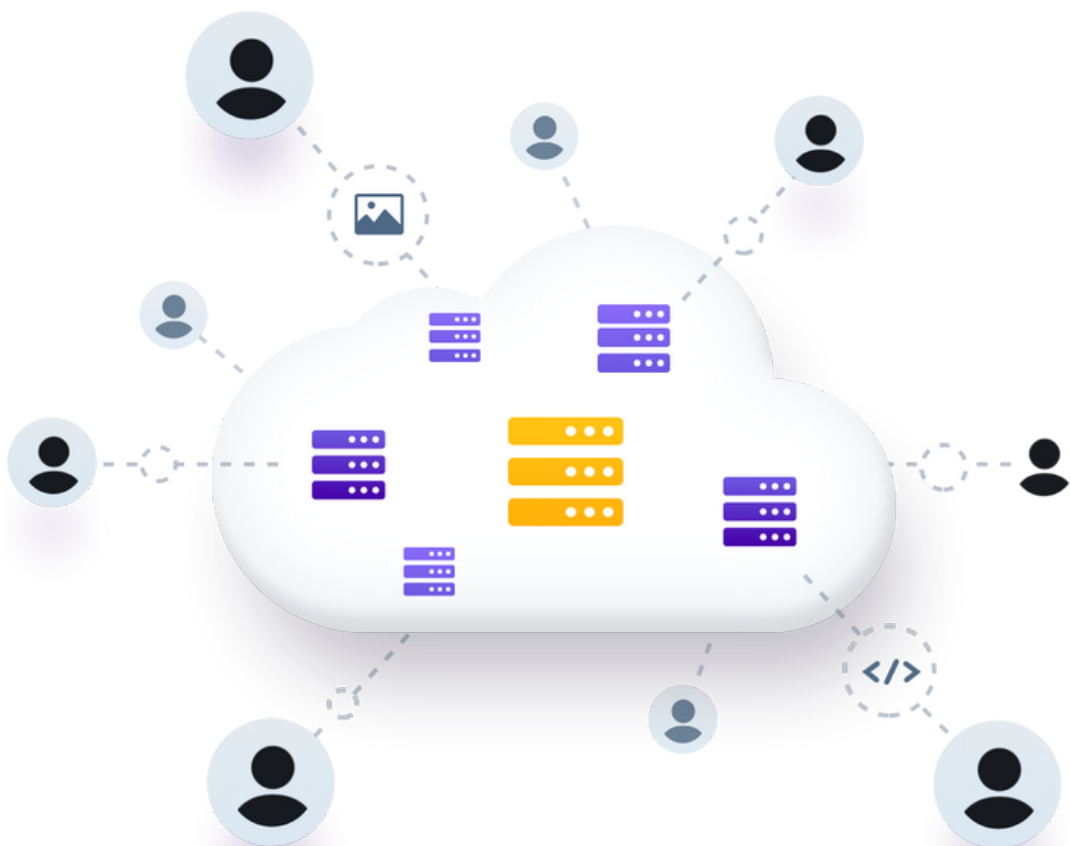
If not, it's time to re-platform to another CMS that can help you manage content for the extensive list of customers and deliver vibrant digital experiences that keep them coming back for more.

As an enterprise business, you might have been used to shopping for your CMS from a specific group of vendors or based on assumptions that might have been valid up to five years or even a decade ago.

However, a few things have changed in today's digital arena.

Today, content management systems that offer a headless approach have become the ideal option for enterprise businesses. Still, with many vendors now offering this capability, it can be tough to choose.

To help you on your journey to finding your next enterprise CMS we've compiled a checklist to point out some of the features and functionality you need to consider.
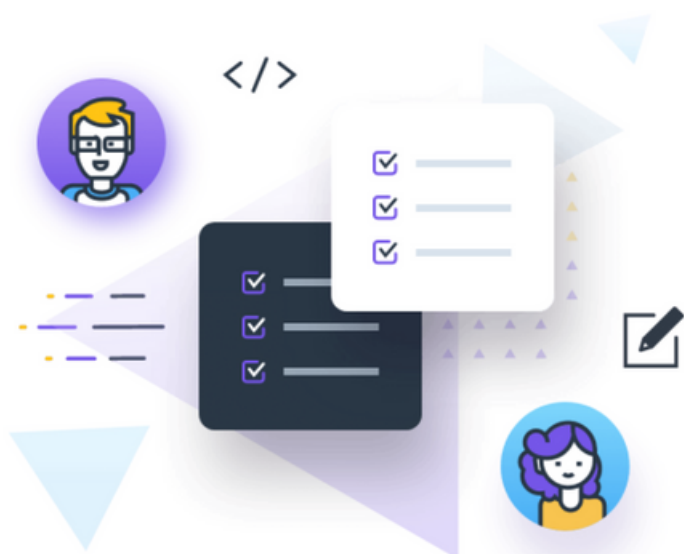

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The Enterprise CMS Myth

When decision-makers think of an enterprise CMS, they think of a legacy or monolithic suite that provides everything they need for their business, from a CMS to ecommerce platform, analytics, and more — all from one vendor. However, an enterprise CMS is simply a content management system that can serve the content needs of a medium to large-sized business and its employees.

An enterprise-level CMS should first and foremost be able to handle the major content needs your business requires, and it needs the features and functionality to do so. Monolithic platforms may promise a one-stop solution for everything you need, but these bulky solutions may fail to meet the needs of modern businesses.

Headless CMS CAGR is expected to increase by 22.6% from 2020-2027 [2]

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Why Monoliths Miss the Mark

Monolithic and all-in-one suites that cater to the enterprise market tend to offer numerous features that look like the perfect solution on the surface. You get a CMS, but you also get analytics, a personalization engine, digital asset management, an ecommerce platform, and more in one software package.

Unfortunately, these solutions tend to offer way more than businesses need or can effectively take advantage of.

The other challenge is that if they do have the human resources to take advantage of these tools, other solutions are available that would provide more flexibility and a better return on investment

Nowadays, an enterprise CMS needs to be future-proof to avoid continuous re-platforming and manage the multitude of channels where content gets published. An enterprise CMS needs to embrace the notion of composability, something which Gartner has been championing recently to highlight the needs of modern enterprises.1

They mention that "application leaders can not meet market needs or business objectives with monolithic digital experience platforms and must update tech stacks." Instead, brands require a platform that enables them to build their own software stack by assembling best-of-breed tools and connecting them using APIs.

This is why a headless approach is ideal for businesses today since it enables businesses to add the best tools for personalization and analytics to their tech stacks. This headless approach also facilitates the modularity and composability of today's modern software architectures.

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Understanding Modern Architectures

The monolithic DXP simply isn't enough to help today's enterprise businesses achieve their targets. When selecting a CMS in 2022, you need to be conscious of the most effective architectures, such as those that follow the principles of MACH and composability.
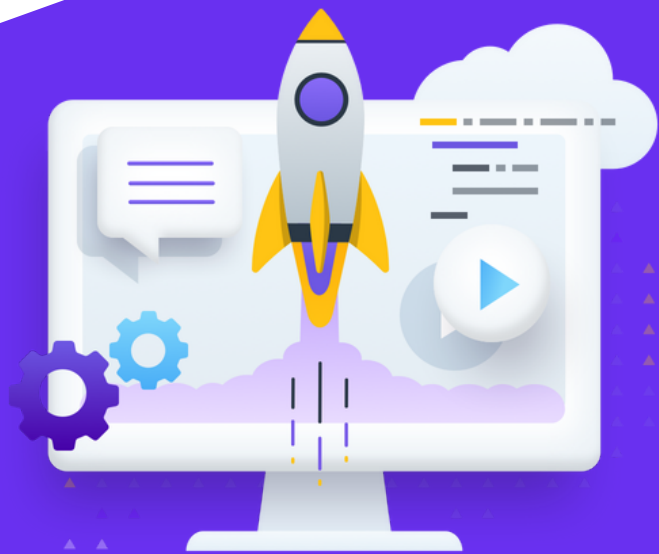
MACH

The MACH acronym refers to microservices, API-first, cloud-native and headless.

Microservices: Applications are individual pieces of business functionality that are independent of each other. As a result, they are developed, deployed, and managed separately rather than together like in a monolithic platform.

API-first: Business functionality gets exposed using APIs that simplify integrations. Here developers aim to make integrations using APIs rather than using orchestration or code-based integrations.

Cloud-native: Applications are deployed in the cloud, which provides storage, hosting, scaling, and automatic updates.

Headless: The front-end presentation layer and back-end database are decoupled, making the platform front-end agnostic so that it can connect to any channel.

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Composability

Composability is the principle that the MACH approach is built on and is also a modern approach for building enterprise-level DXPs. A composable DXP is a digital experience platform that gives businesses complete control over their software stack.

They can easily select and integrate best-of-breed technologies as they see fit and build a tech stack based on their specific requirements, rather than be restricted to the tools a monolithic platform offers.

A headless CMS, which provides the core functionality and sits at the heart of your composable DXP, can help build digital experiences across a host of touchpoints.

Enterprises are changing architectures due to an evolution of how technologies are being structured, and if you don't want to be a laggard, you'll need to embrace these changes as well.
But what else should you be looking for in your enterprise headless CMS? See the checklist to find out.

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Enterprise Headless CMS Checklist

Take a look at this 37-point checklist to determine if the headless CMS you're considering is enough for your enterprise needs.

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Initial Considerations

1.How will you use your CMS?

This depends heavily on your organization. Start analyzing your current digital maturity levels and the types of digital experiences you might want to create now and in the future.

2.What are your business goals?

Can the headless CMS you choose help your business meet its short-term and long-term goals?
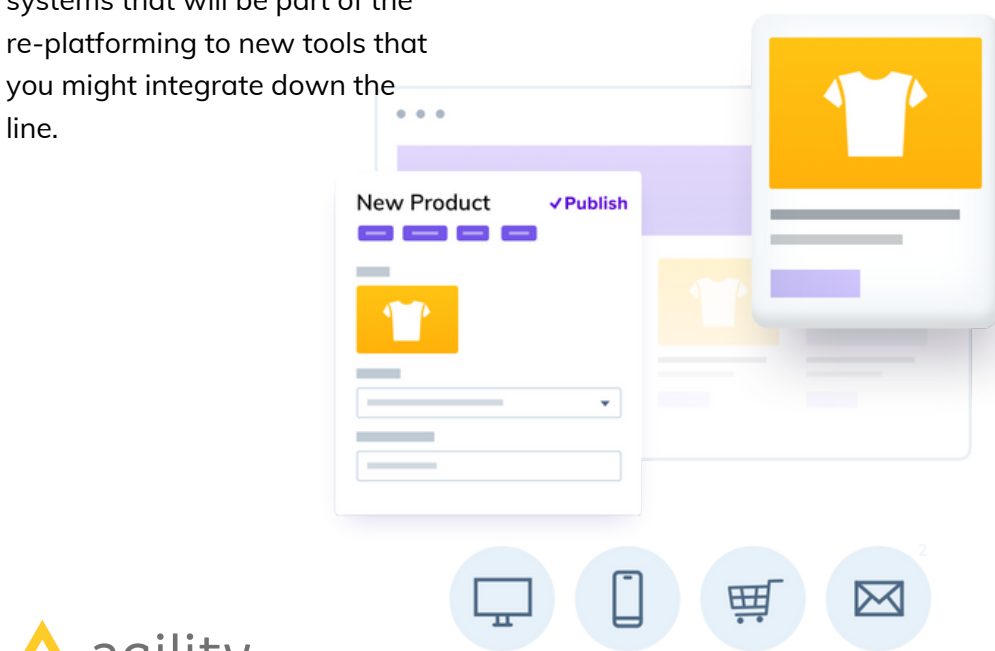
3.What are your performance and integration needs?

As an enterprise business, peak performance is fundamental. You need to ensure that your headless CMS provides consistent uptime and the types of integrations you will need to include, from your existing systems that will be part of the re-platforming to new tools that you might integrate down the line.

4.What are your internal resource capabilities?

How extensive is your IT department and marketing team? These leaders of these departments will likely be part of your decision-making process and help you assess whether your internal teams can make the most of your next headless CMS or if you need assistance with the implementation.

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Architecture

5. Is the underlying architecture monolithic or microservices-based?

If your enterprise CMS has a monolithic architecture— which you get with an all-in-one suite—it can be more of a hindrance than a help. With a microservices-based architecture, your tech stack is leaner as it's composed of individual pieces of business functionality that combine to create one system.
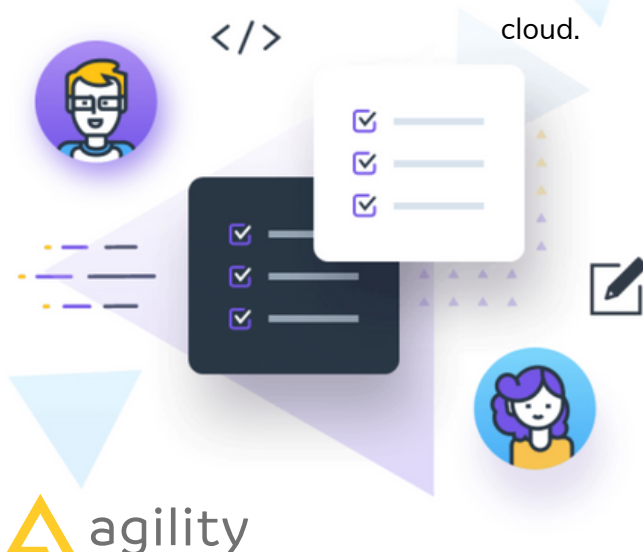
6.Is the platform API-first?

APIs are the cornerstones of the modern web. Every application and business relies on them, so your enterprise CMS should be API-first to connect to other software tools easily.

7.Can you embrace composability?

Composability is critical for modern enterprises as it enables organizations to select the best tools for the job and build from the ground up. With this modular approach to building a software stack, businesses can also swap out pieces as their needs change rather than suffering from vendor lock-in.

8.Is the CMS cloud-based or on-premise?

Enterprise CMSs have been traditionally on-premises that you can manage yourself. But in the modern age, your business may prefer a SaaS solution that is hosted in the cloud.

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9. Does the CMS vendor offer a content delivery network (CDN)?

With a CDN, the network will hold copies of all of the images, videos, documents, and scripts that are loaded by a visitor's web browser. **Having your CDN built into the CMS can help you reduce load times and streamline your content creation.**

10. How flexible is the data structure?

The capability to create data types and relate them to each other is vital for a CMS. Still, it's more important to be able to do these things well, which is why choosing between a CMS with JSON, XML, or Jamstack structure can help you delineate how your data will relate to your website. In addition, you need to consider how that data will be accessed.

11. Is the platform multi-tenant?

Multi-tenant architecture allows a software application to provide each tenant with a dedicated share of the instance's functionality, including configuration, data, and user management, which works wonders if several people collaborate on your website at the same time.

12. Does your CMS have its own internal site search?

Internal site search enables users to search for terms on your site, improving user experience and SEO. You should find a CMS with the search functionality to make finding things easier.
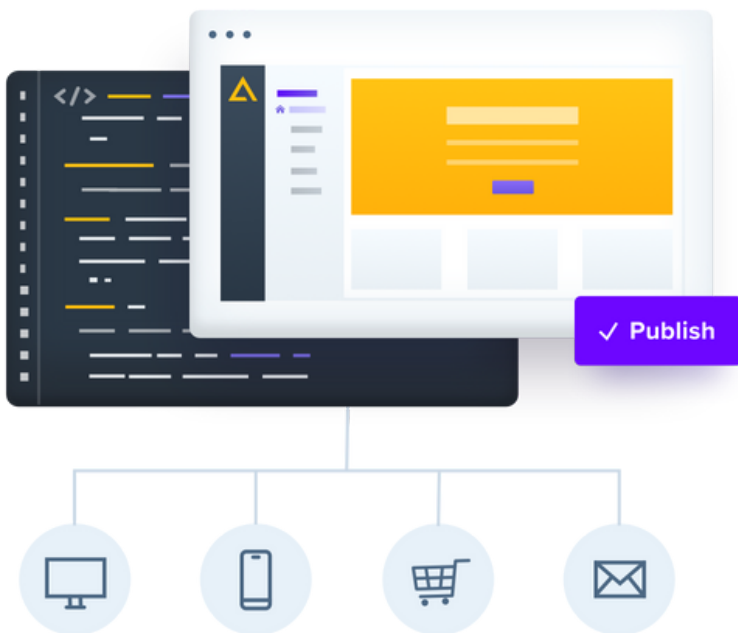
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Budget

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13. Will it be too costly to scale in the future?

While an initial budget might not phase your business at the enterprise level, you might need to scale in the future. So you need to determine if your CMS can scale with you and the types of costs you might incur.

14. What are the projected maintenance/license fees for the CMS?

Aside from the technical requirements for your CMS platform, there are also some implementation and maintenance requirements that you should consider.

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Speed and Scalability

15.How easy is the CMS to deploy?

Implementations can be time and resource-draining if you don't have the right platform. Ensure that your team can easily deploy your new headless CMS without going over the budget or project scope.

16.What are your security requirements?

Each company has different regulatory compliance requirements. Some have stricter controls and more comprehensive measures than others, but you have to be sure that your CMS meets the minimum baseline controls.
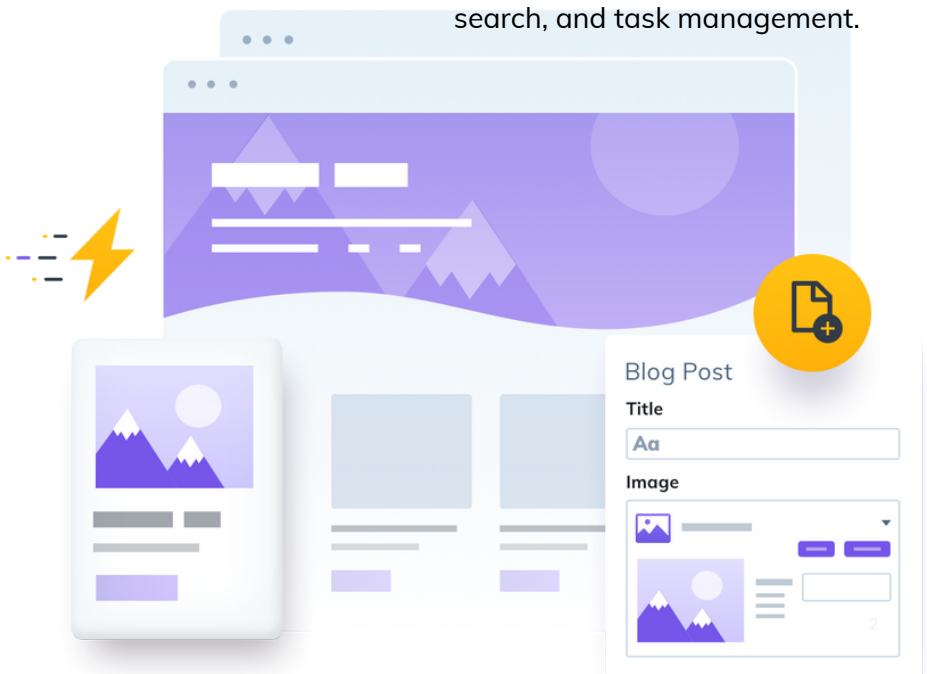
17.Can you start small and scale later?

As the amount of content grows, the problem becomes how to manage it from the creation process to the need to access it later. You need a CMS that can help you scale from the ground up.

18.What time-saving features does it include?

A headless CMS provides features that can help your enterprise business grow, including saving time. Consider how your CMS will help content managers, authors, and even your developers save time and have the freedom to experiment.

You should consider how much you need features like customizable content workflows, global content search, and task management.

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Security and Permissions

19. How granular are the permissions and roles?

In an enterprise business with hundreds of employees, you will need to create a variety of roles and permissions to ensure that only the right people have access. The more granular your permissions are the better for your company in terms of data protection and website security.

20. Does it have formal security accreditation?

Other than an SSL certificate, there are other security accreditations that your CMS needs to have so you know you're dealing with a serious provider that puts your security at the front and center.

21. Is there a disaster recovery plan?

A disaster recovery plan is applied to the aspects of an organization that depend on a functioning IT infrastructure. This plan helps your company resolve data loss and recover system functionality so that it can perform in the aftermath of an incident.

22. Does it support single sign-on?

Single sign-on provides secure authentication for multiple applications and websites but requires users to log in only once

Single sign-on lets you log in quickly and safely from a trusted device while a third party verifies who you are, a crucial component for an enterprise business.

Agility CMS is SOC 2 Type II Compliant, providing enterprise-level security for customers' data

Content Management

23. Is the content authoring interface marketer-friendly and easy to use, and SEO friendly?

Your chosen headless CMS needs to have a clear interface that makes it easy for marketers to publish content, preview content across devices, create workflows, and manage pages just like they can with a legacy CMS. This should include options to improve your SEO.

24. Is it easy to preview content?

Knowing how your content will look on a website or other channel before publishing is important for your marketing team. Having the ability to preview content with context is essential to avoid mistakes.

25. Is there a content architecture you can mold your content strategy around?

Some headless CMS vendors provide very little guidance when it comes to how your content should be structured, if at all. Look for a CMS with a content architecture that supports a scalable content strategy.

26. Does the CMS enable non-technical users to create more complex content?

WYSIWYG editors are the best way of producing error-free content quickly using a rich-text editor that helps marketers create in a no-code environment. If you plan to produce content at scale, a WYSIWYG editor is a must for your non-technical team members to easily embed videos, tables, widgets and make general content changes without needing developers.

27. Can you easily localize your content?

Translation and localization are two fundamental parts of content marketing. Your headless CMS needs to be able to help you create localized campaigns that are specifically tailored to different regions and language speakers.

28. Does it offer support for multiple channels?

A headless CMS allows you to deliver content to multiple channels, but you also need flexibility for your developers. This means flexibility in the frontend technologies developers can use to create different user experiences and personalization to support varied user preferences.

Discover how Agility CMS can help support your goals >

APIs and Extensibility

29. Is your CMS extensible with APIs and SDKs?

Extensibility means the capacity of your CMS to handle third-party extensions. The more you can extend the functionality of your CMS the better you can handle various scenarios and improve your CMS' capabilities.

An API-driven CMS provides you with the required backend services and data structure needed to manage your data. It also integrates with any existing systems by making simple API calls to the CMS.

30. Does it offer add-ons or plugins for customization?

Some CMS come with their own add-ons and plugins for you to install and hit the ground running quickly. When choosing a CMS, you need to make sure that these plugins are what you need or that the system enables you to integrate third-party software.

31. Does your CMS support open standards?

Open standards are freely accessible programming languages and processes that can be adopted, implemented, and extended by developers royalty-free. Not all CMSs support this, so if being open source matters to you, you should identify the platforms built in this way.

32. Does the vendor provide certified partners you can choose from?
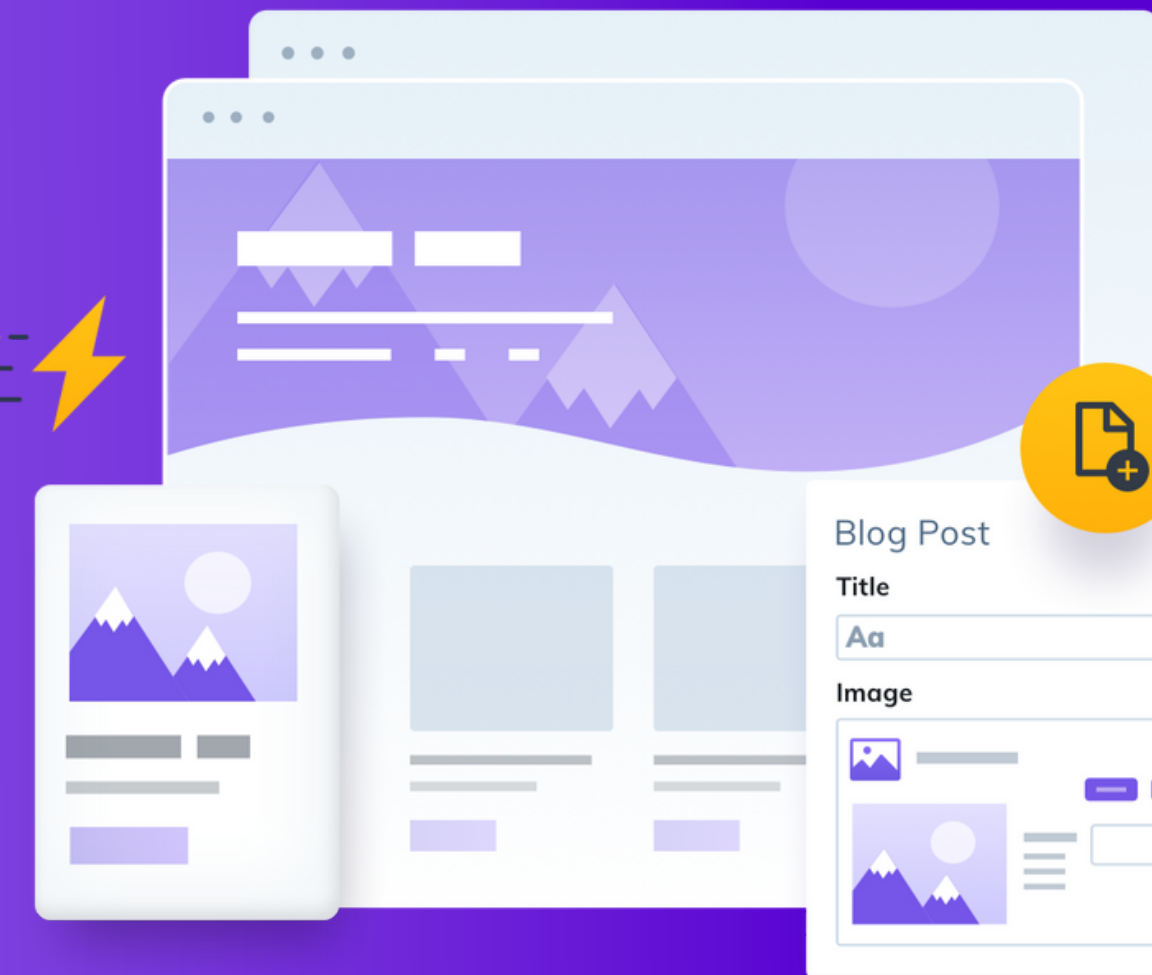
Many platforms have a list of partners and other vendors that work directly with them, guaranteeing better performance and seamless integration. Check your vendor's partners and see if what they offer is also in sync with your company's goals.

33. Does it come with tools or methods for migrating thousands of pages of content?

Migration is always a challenge when re-platforming, more so if you run an enterprise business with thousands of pages. Determine if your CMS can help you migrate your content or you need third-party software to assist.

A Headless CMS that meets all your checklist standards >

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Additional Features & Support

34. Does it provide insights and monitoring into how customers interact with the content?

Analytics provides the content marketing and business teams with insights to optimize organic traffic and page and content performance. When choosing your headless CMS, pick one that has native integrations with Google Analytics or any other embeddable analytics framework.

Dashboards show your website's health and enable you to take action based on the KPIs you're monitoring.

35. Does the CMS offer internal search features?

Having an internal search feature in your website really eases navigation. It helps visitors find the content they're looking for faster and it also improves your website SEO and increases your visitors' web session time.
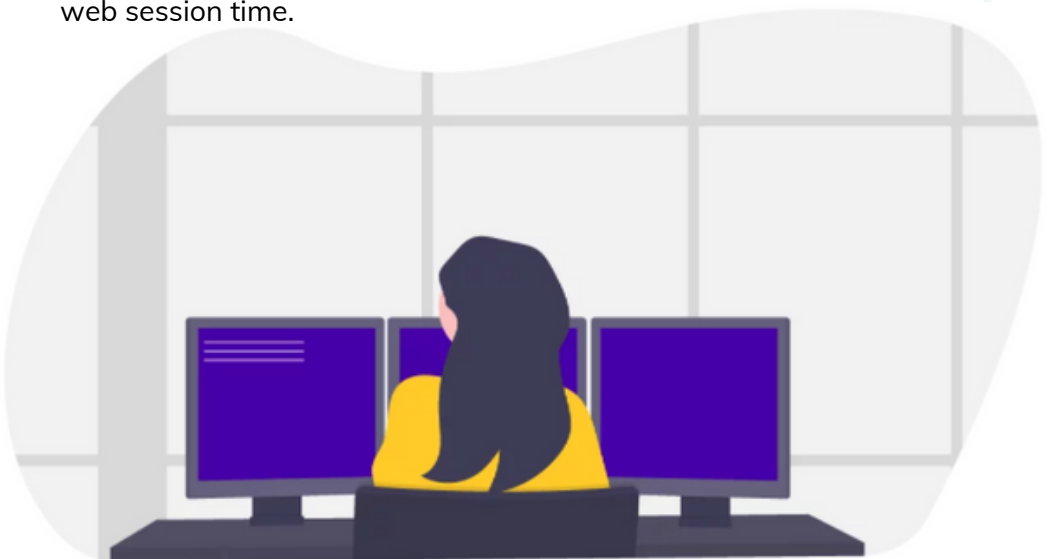
36. Does the vendor offer 24/7 live support?

Constant support is a must if you're just starting with a new CMS. From onboarding right through to when you're a happy customer needing support for something that does work.

37. Is it backed up with appropriate technical documentation and user guides and training?

Your team needs proper support to get the maximum benefit from your CMS. User guides, documentation, and training provide these capabilities, and you should assess what your next CMS has to offer.

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You've just gone through our checklist, and now you're wondering which headless CMSs meet your requirements. We urge you to consider Agility CMS as one of your options.

Agility CMS provides you with all of the functionality of a headless CMS and the ease of use of a traditional CMS, including the authoring tools your marketers need. We provide the speed and flexibility that enterprise businesses need and the best-of-breed support to choose the right tools for each scenario. Here are some examples of how we do just that:

Giving Cineplex Evergreen Flexibility

Movie theater brand Cineplex needed to build a new website that would give them more freedom with design and more flexibility if they needed to scale and expand. Agility CMS offered a future-proof solution with an intuitive and easy-to-use CMS that continues to evolve with the brand as their needs change.

Powering Mitsubishi's Digital Transformation

Manufacturing brand Mitsubishi needed a flexible headless CMS that could respond to the needs of its numerous departments. With Agility CMS, they found a platform that provided the traditional user-friendly tools they were accustomed to and architecture capable of meeting today's ever-changing business demands.

Solving Scotiabank's Content Management Conundrum

Canadian multinational banking and financial services company Scotiabank wanted to maintain a consistent content infrastructure as they expanded to new regions. Agility CMS gave them the ability to deliver an exceptional user experience to both content editors and developers, which means a better experience for their customers.
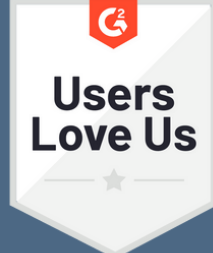
Enterprise businesses need a flexible and future-proof solution to help them navigate a digital transformation, tame their multi-channel content management needs, and more. Discover more of Agility's enterprise capabilities by viewing our case studies.

Endnotes
1 Gartner, Adopt a Composable DXP Strategy to Future-Proof Your Tech Stack (gartner.com)
2 Report Linker Headless CMS Software Market Forecast to 2027 - COVID-19 Impact and Global Analysis by Deployment Type and Enterprise Size (reportlinker.com)

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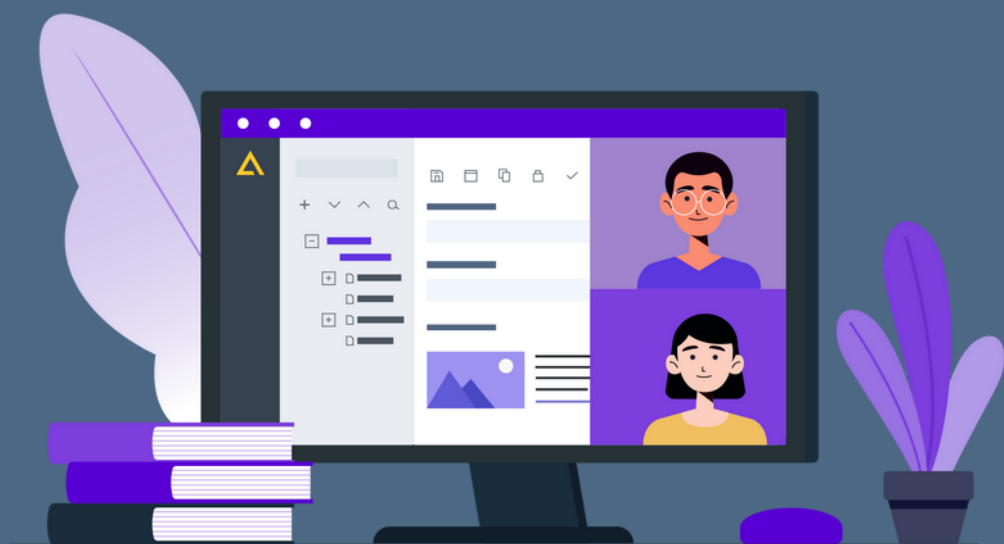*AGILITY CMS IS THE LEADING CONTENT PLATFORM FOR ENTERPRISEE DIGITAL EXPERIENCES*

The platform adopts all the aspect of Headless CMS that makes an omnichannel approach easy, with the understanding that Page Management is of utmost importance in any website project.

Agility is proprietary CMS with full Support and Security that gives creative freedom to both Developers and Marketers and eliminates friction between the teams.

Developers have full freedom to use any coding language and any framework and code and define custom Page Templates and Module Definitions.

These pre-defined custom Modules and Page Templates are available to the Marketing Teams to effortlessly create a variety of pages to meet their fast-changing needs and market requirements. Agility CMS believes in Content First Approach and heavily invests in helping clients to build future-proof Content Architecture.

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How is Agility Different?

- It is a modern Composable DXP with flexible Headless approach in its heart.

- Unlike many other Headless CMS, Agility CMS also offers tools for Enterprise teams to effortlessly manage content delivery to websites and apps like Page Management, Sitemaps, Content Modelling.

- With Page Management built-in, developers don't have to build an entirely new way to manage pages and routing. At the same time, marketers can easily edit content across a variety of channels without any coding experience.

- Agility CMS provides enterprise-level security and support, it is SOC2 compliant.

- Agility CMS is Jamstack friendly and allows to start quickly with your favorite frameworks and deploy with a few clicks.

Details

- License Model: Agility CMS is a multi-tenant SaaS platform, and hosted on MicrosoftAzure Cloud

- Price: Starts with FREE Developer Edition. Paid plans have extensive TRIAL. Learn more.

- Key Components: Page Management, Content Relationships, Content Modelling, POS, Search, User Generated Content, Personalization, Digital Asset Management. Unlimited content models, Locales, API calls,

- Upgrades: Automatic, monthly platform updates.

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