

# The four principles of modern digital product development





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## Streamline product development, ship faster and edge out the competition

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Contentful helps businesses iterate and ship faster. In this paper, we share the four key principles of digital product development that have helped Contentful customers make impressive gains in productivity and shipping speeds. We've included customer examples to show you what's possible with a modern web stack.

### CONTENT AND DEVELOPMENT OCCUR IN PARALLEL

Businesses can save time and resources by decoupling content and development workflows. This is true for businesses that have separate

content and development teams as well as those with cross-functional teams. To prevent bottlenecks, content creators and those who develop the core product should have separate workflows.

Businesses should be able to perform these functions in parallel, or in the order that best fits their priorities. This empowers digital leaders to align priorities across functions. Content creators, marketers and developers can focus on their parts without unnecessary co-dependencies, such as waiting for developers to push content updates.

**“Virtually every brand today is, to at least some degree, in the digital product development business, whether it’s designing an ecommerce shopping experience for mobile apps, bringing supply chain management capabilities to tablets in a warehouse or simply maintaining a website for investor relations.”**

– Nis Frome, [“Going behind the scenes of digital product development”](#)



## HOW MUCH TIME CAN PARALLEL WORKFLOWS SAVE?

Depending on a business's current workflow, the time saved can be dramatic. Xoom (now a part of PayPal) sped up deployment time from two weeks to 30 minutes by decoupling content from the development cycle. Now, their content updates no longer have to stagnate in limbo until the next developer release.

Decoupling content and technology also helped TUI Nordic make impressive gains in developer and content editor team productivity. Now, they can produce new customer touchpoints faster, quickly adapt to change and keep up with customer needs.

These questions can help determine how much speed your business could gain by decoupling content and development workflows:

1. When a project kicks off, how long do content creators have to wait for developers to create new templates and layouts before they can populate content?
2. Do developers have to wait for content to be uploaded before testing can be completed?
3. Are developers needed to push content updates live? If so, how much speed would you gain by empowering editors to push content live themselves?
4. How much time do developers lose updating hard-coded content and pushing content updates live?

Another factor to consider is the time lost during handoffs between content creators and developers. Handoffs and task-switching are two of the seven wastes of software development, according to Mary and Tom Poppendieck in [Lean Software Development: An Agile Toolkit](#). At each handoff, teams waste precious time transferring knowledge, switching gears and getting back into the flow.

A well-planned content infrastructure enables content and development to happen in parallel. Creatives can release content at their own pace and store it in logical chunks that are tagged for easy identification by developers. Meanwhile, developers focus on building a presentation layer instead of creating endless CMS templates. Unnecessary interdependencies and handoffs are eliminated – [increasing the pace of production](#).



## Kill Redundancy

Content and development teams tend to accumulate redundant tasks and extra work as more products are created. These include copying and pasting content between CMSes, manually distributing content across channels and relying on developers to push content updates. These deceptively simple tasks generate a startling amount of busy work, eating up time that could otherwise be devoted towards more significant projects.

Before Contentful, [Trunk Club \(Nordstrom\)](#) needed an entire team of editors to maintain frequently-updated content across CMSes that didn't sync. The engineering team also had to push every single change live, repeatedly distracting them from development work. With Contentful, Trunk Club migrated to a single content hub and empowered editors and marketers to independently post content.

### ONE CONTENT HUB TO RULE THEM ALL

Bringing fragmented content into a single content hub can eliminate redundant tasks. Workflows become more efficient – empowering content creators and freeing developers to work on new products and features.

“Simply put, single-sourcing content saves time and money. It also helps keep your content consistent,” writes Val Swisher, founder and CEO of Content Rules, in [“Why Single-Sourcing Content is Better than Copy and Paste.”](#) She highlights many of the same benefits we see among customers who use Contentful as a content hub:

- The same content, images and translations can be used in multiple deliverables.
- Corrections and updates are made in one place, and all deliverables that use that content are automatically synced.
- Content is uniform across deliverables, so branding and style guidelines stay consistent.

### HOW MUCH TIME CAN UNIFYING CONTENT SAVE?

Streamlining content operations helped TELUS, Canada's fastest growing telecommunications company, [quadruple speed to market](#) and beat the competition. It became the only company in Canada able to offer the Apple iPhone X in the first 15 minutes after it was released.

To determine how much time a content hub could save your business, Swisher recommends looking at how much time the business spends on the following:

- Rewriting or copying and pasting content that already exists;
- Creating the same content for different deliverables;
- Reviewing content that has already been finalized someplace else;
- Updating content in multiple places; and
- Translating content that has already been translated someplace else.

Swisher also recommends calculating how much everyone involved in the pipeline gets paid. Assigning a monetary value to wasted time can help make the case for investing in a content infrastructure that reduces redundant tasks. Businesses in highly competitive industries might also want to calculate the ROI they can reap by getting to market faster.



## Great ideas can start anywhere

Great ideas come from many places: customer feedback, data analytics or even a comment during a sales meeting. Unfortunately, many great ideas molder in long development queues until they are no longer relevant. This can cause infighting between teams and discourage people from bringing fresh ideas to the table.

Businesses must create an atmosphere where people can present new ideas, test drive their feasibility and make rapid improvements. "Innovation programs should no longer be the domain of certain departments, such as engineering, R&D or product development," writes Alex Goryachev, Cisco's director of Innovation Programs and Strategy, in ["9 Steps to Harnessing the Power of Your People to Innovate."](#)

The easier it is for your team to iterate and improve digital products, the more likely they are to pursue

new ideas and make small changes that can result in big improvements. "Failure" is no longer a dirty word – quick iteration ensures that very little time is wasted on ideas that don't pan out.

Making small updates and corrections should take minutes, not days. Editors and marketers should be able to independently repurpose content, images and features to create new pages and layouts. This eliminates the time wasted on justifying the request and keeps developers focused on their top priorities. People are then free to implement their ideas where and when they can have the most impact.

"Contentful empowers us to create new layouts and weave intricate visual stories without having to wait for the IT department to deliver a new CSS or update the code." – Greg Dolder, Director of Technology, Specialized Bicycles

## Scalability is built in

Avoid the risk of failure to scale (or failure to scale before the competition) by choosing tools and platforms that build in scalability from the start. With the ideal platform, fast prototyping and scalability doesn't have to be an either/or decision.

"Once you've discovered the successful formula, there's no time to go back and design a 'production' version of the product to handle usage at scale." – AWS Startups Blog, ["Why Your Minimum Viable Product Must Scale"](#)

Look at how time is spent between building a working proof of concept and launching a product. Are developers using one technology for the POC and then reengineering to another that can scale? Eliminate the need to build a foundation twice. This cuts development time and provides confidence that new digital products will scale on demand.

Using Contentful's powerful and scalable APIs, [demodern was able to build a prototype for Nike in a few days](#) and successfully launch a new digital experience just three months later. "Such short turnaround time would be unimaginable if we would have decided to create our own backend," said Florian Mueller, Project Manager at demodern.



## Invest in a modern web stack

In a world where customers want personalization and on-demand access, decreasing time to market is a huge competitive advantage. New opportunities for digital engagement are continuously emerging, from wearables to connected home devices and interactive kiosks. Companies that invest in a modern web stack made up of best-in-breed technologies position themselves as leaders in their industries.

Want to learn more about Contentful features that can empower your developers and content editors? Trying to figure out how your digital teams can transform content operations and deliver an ever-growing portfolio of new digital experiences? Check out this [white paper](#).

