How modern retailers win customers with engaging digital experiences

contentful

Content

Introduction

Consumers interact with more content across more connected devices than ever before, and expect a consistent and personalized experience. According to a survey by Accenture and the Retail Industry Leaders Association, 63% of consumers surveyed indicated that they were interested in personalized shopping experiences.

Content is the currency that drives sales for retailers. As new channels proliferate, the most successful retailers are the ones who put their customers at the center of their strategy, take advantage of all digital channels and engage with high-quality and personalized digital experiences.

To stay competitive, retailers must produce new websites and apps quickly and at scale. The most forward-thinking ones do so by building a unified digital factory — cross-functional teams using global architecture, all built on a modern tech stack. Developers and editors can work together to deliver new digital products faster in order to engage in new channels and create opportunities.

One of the critical components of the digital factory workflow is content operations. Many companies struggle with one or more legacy CMSes that are hard to customize, keep content siloed and slow everyone down. Luckily, there's a solution: API-first platforms like Contentful provide flexible, modular content management.

These platforms can easily plug into the modern technology stack and power content across a company's entire digital portfolio from one central hub. Editors can create new content and directly update it themselves in real time across websites, apps, devices, on-site displays and more. For both developers and editors, this approach is a game changer.

A centralized content management platform allows retailers to publish new content, run tests, collect feedback and close the loop much faster than before. They can access and deliver only the most relevant and customized content for their customers and campaigns.

If you are looking to transform your organization's content operations, don't let a CMS get in the way. Learn how the top retailers are using Contentful to get to market faster, be more responsive to customers and scale their digital footprint as their business grows.
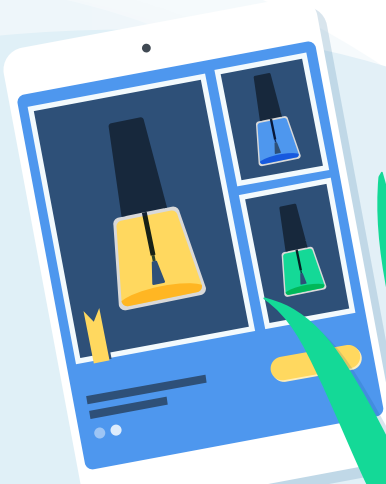
Aldo transforms from brick and mortar store to global taste-making retailer

THE ALDO GROUP'S DIGITAL JOURNEY LED THEM TO OUTGROW THEIR CMS

As the Aldo Group matured digitally, they were looking for a CMS that could keep up with the growth. Content plays a key role in the Aldo Group's ecommerce and retail strategies, and they were concerned about losing time when making content changes. Along with improving publishing time, they were looking for a system that has versioning functionalities.

This was getting in the way of digital initiatives like conditional content, bi-variate testing and personalization. For a company that values knowledge of the customer and serving curated experiences to its clientele, these digital initiative roadblocks were business-critical.

The Aldo Group needed a solution that was robust and flexible enough to support them through their digital journey. When Callitspring.com planned to launch a new website, the Aldo Group recognized that it was time to try something new. They had a few key requirements for their content solution: a robust feature list, security, easy implementation and a sterling reputation.

RESULTS

The Aldo Group implemented Contentful for all UI elements across Callitspring. com, Globoshoes.com and Aldoshoes. com. Landing pages, promotional banners, tiles and copy are all managed through Contentful's content platform.

The marketing and merchandising teams boast 30 Contentful users, and now completely owns content publishing. For
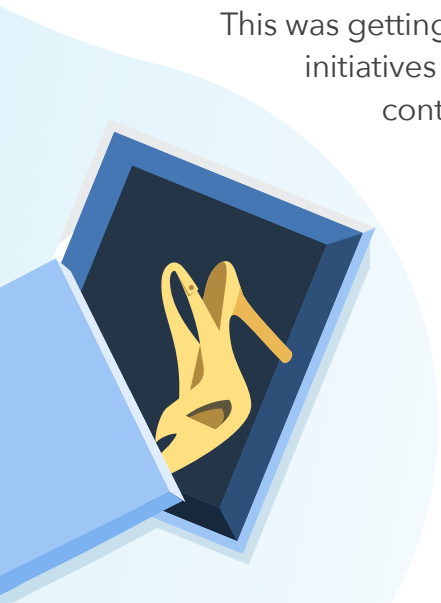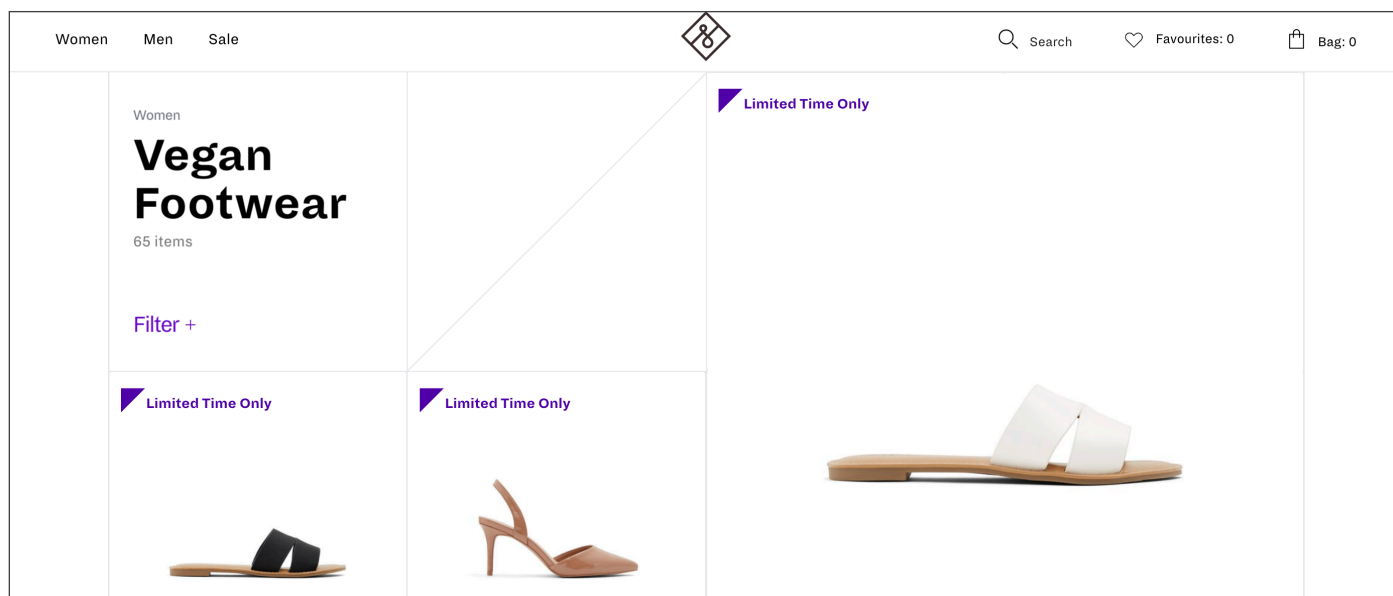
large launches and initiatives, the marketing team can take care of content ahead of time and not worry about potential bugs or blockers related to the CMS. For example, the Aldo Group was able to plan and execute all of their content for an SAP launch far ahead of time. The day of launch, they did not need to think about content issues, they were able to focus on the technical aspects of launching a new system.

The biggest return, ultimately, is the time saved for both marketing and technical teams. Since no deployments are needed, the developer teams can focus on higher value initiatives as they move away from a content support role. Marketing teams are also more efficient in creating content refreshes.

Time-to-publish has gone down significantly, as the marketing teams are able to create and implement continuously refreshed content. They're also freed from mundane tasks, and are able to share more creative stories with users.

Contentful has become a foundational piece of the Aldo Group's content strategy going forward. It provides a direct communication channel from the marketing team to end users. As the experimentation and personalization programs mature, The Aldo Group plans to use this strong foundation to continue making sure that customers receive the most relevant, useful experience. For its next project, the Aldo Group plans to use Contentful to create a personalized loyalty program.

KEY LEARNINGS

- Understand the limitations of your current system and pain points of ALL users of the tool.
- Ensure that the new system aligns with strategic initiatives 3-5 years out, not only with today's digital platforms.
- Spend 80% of project time thinking out the problem (user pain points, limitations, technical considerations) and the rest implementing the solution.

TRUNK CLUB

Trunk Club delivers fashion-forward advice to any device

As online purveyors of style, Trunk Club's website has to look the part. Their engineering team needed to deliver an exceptional viewing experience for their customers.

The Trunk Club team decided to take a cue from their company's stylists. Rather than choosing an out-of-the-box CMS that would make their style guides and advice look like Yet Another Fashion Site, they built something completely fresh and new. Trunk Club chose Contentful to be the heart of their content experience.z

CREATE CONTENT ONCE, PUBLISH EVERYWHERE

Trunk Club is owned by Nordstrom, and Nordstrom clientele expect an unparalleled online experience. Trunk Club's fashion advice and looks should be just as enjoyable on an Android app as they are on a 27" display.

Before discovering Contentful, Trunk Club's team put in a significant amount of work into ensuring the consistency of content across multiple devices. The team rolled out several CMSes, including one just for mobile. "The content worked relatively well for the purpose it was built – to be featured on the website, but not much beside that," Justin Hughes, VP of product development and design, says. "As a result, the team introduced a different CMS to manage mobile content once the mobile apps were launched. The two CMSes did not sync in any way, so a group of editors was tasked with maintaining and editing content across these platforms."

Trunk Club sought a means to end this redundancy forever when they chose Contentful. Writers and editors received a simple content editor. Developers could then use a RESTful API to convert this text into JSON for both the web and mobile

Style Guides for Men

Curated collections of style inspiration to get you ready for any moment.

Travel & Lifestyle Advice

Discover your style, whether you're traveling somewhere new or just looking for inspiration. We'll show you how with our travel advice and lifestyle guides.

Spring Style

Liven up your wardrobe for the new season. See all the latest styles and trends for spring along with outfit inspiration and advice from our expert stylists.

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apps. With a single content repository in place, the Trunk Club marketing team could focus on crafting valuable content for each screen size, not on the various CMS technologies they had to accommodate.

Hughes's team began to incorporate Contentful, which runs on AWS, across all of Trunk Club's tech stacks. By collaborating with the marketing team to build their content data model, the team created fields for long-form web descriptions as well as short-form mobile descriptions of every type and style.

SHIPPING THE LATEST FASHION TRENDS – NOW STRAIGHT FROM SLACK

Demand for certain looks can skyrocket after an appearance on the red carpet or celebrity Instagram feeds. It's critical that Trunk Club stays on top of this demand with up-to-date advice, brands, looks and style.

Before Contentful, Trunk Club's engineering team deployed every single change to the company's content. Not only was it a bottleneck for writers — it served as a consistent distraction for Hughes's team. "Eventually, the engineering team decided that Contentful could be used to relieve them of a burden of publishing content updates," Hughes says. They integrated it into the staging and production versions of each app. Then, Contentful was integrated into Slack using webhooks.

VELOCITY OF CONTENT AS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Contentful is an integral part of Trunk Club's marketing strategy. "The ability to produce and deliver contezznt that provides sartorial advice and personalized recommendations is essential to the company. Our content provides Trunk Club with a way to maintain authority in the styling domain," says Hughes.

> **"The marketing team can trigger deploys anytime by typing a simple command in the dedicated channel."**
>
> — Justin Hughes, VP of product development and design, Trunk Club

Sticker Mule accelerates growth opportunities with a flexible content model

At 8 p.m. on a weeknight, Skt. Oberholz, a trendy cafe located in the central part of Berlin, is a hive of activity. Tourists fumble at their phones, students take notes, a few chatty neighbors trade gossip, and a big crowd of busy-looking people hunch over their MacBooks.

Cafes like Skt. Oberholz are the ground zero of startup activity in cities around the world, and looking at the stickers covering those laptops can reveal a great deal about the latest fortunes of software applications, programming languages and political candidates. Swag is big business these days. And no one knows that better than Sticker Mule – the company that made stickers the staple of startup marketing.

Like many other great companies, Sticker Mule was born out of personal frustration. Anthony Constantino, founder and CEO, cut his teeth in the manufacturing world and was all too familiar with how the lack

of direct relationship with customers puts manufacturers at the mercy of partners and intermediaries. Taking direct orders online offered him a chance to create a faster and more enjoyable experience for customers, which is how Sticker Mule came about.

PUBLISH FAST, PUBLISH OFTEN

Being the internet's favorite sticker printer comes with certain challenges. Let's just say not everyone is born with a talent to tell their vinyl decals apart from front adhesives, or visualize a 5"x5" shape on a cover of their Mac. And the Sticker Mule team gets that. As Constantino says, the company's primary goal is not to build an ecommerce store, but rather tocreate a great experience for anyone ordering online.

"Take an example of a die cut sticker," David Traver, VP of marketing explains. "It's a type of sticker that is custom cut to fit the shape of a design and can be used for many

different things: logo stickers, beer labels, window stickers, and branding anything from laptops to surfboards. This is how people think about their orders, even if at the end of the day they just need a die cut sticker." To steer visitors to the right product, Sticker Mule took to building pages focused on specific uses.

Guiding visitors along the purchase path requires a lot of diverse, engaging content, but legacy CMSes struggle to accommodate this need. Sticker Mule eventually settled down for creating new pages manually, which made it slow and expensive to roll out fresh content. As developer Andre Oliveira explains, "Even a simple request from the marketing team would require us to spin up new tables, wire them up to views, add a form for editing content, and worry about a dozen other things." In this context, marketing was forced to constantly prioritize its initiatives and ration promotional campaigns.

Adopting Contentful changed all of that. What used to be a time-consuming project with unpredictable timelines became a two-minute task handled by the marketing team. "Most of the content already exists within Contentful, as an entry, video, review or a technical spec on some other page. My job is just to pull all the relevant information into one place. It takes two minutes to do that," David Traver says.

From custom stickers to custom packaging tape, all of Sticker Mule's products are very visual. Great photos and helpful videos are a core part of every page on the site. Contentful allowed marketing and design to focus on quickly creating the best looking content without worrying about waiting or asking for help from the development team.

The surprising breakthrough in productivity has to do with the way the content structure is defined inside Contentful.

DOING AWAY WITH TECHNICAL DEBT

Software engineers tend to view development speed and technical debt as two sides of the same coin: Tighter deadlines create messier code. This is especially true in the case of a traditional CMS, whose innards typically consist of a tangle of core modules, open-source libraries, custom-built extensions and security patches. In such a tightly knit environment, even minor tweaks risk provoking a full-blown application meltdown. Faced with this architectural flaw, developers have no choice but to play tug of war over external deadlines the business imposes on them.

Tools like Contentful cut through this knotted problem by putting APIs at their core. APIs are endpoints that allow developers to fetch, post, and modify application content by following a few simple instructions. The clearly structured nature of APIs combined with language-specific SDKs makes it possible to integrate Contentful into a specific front-end framework with a few lines of code.

The biggest benefit, by far, is the shift from battling deadlines to delivering high-quality features. As Andre Oliveira explains, "These days, we get a working prototype up and running in 30 to 60 minutes." To the business team, this offers an opportunity to refine prototypes into well-designed features; to the engineers, a chance to eliminate unnecessary work. "We can get a sign-off from the business team before committing any sizable resources to building the

> "This project has been a huge win. Once developers define a new content type in Contentful, it becomes simple for our marketing team to put together a new page."
>
> — David Traver, VP of marketing, Sticker Mule

project," he says, "which allows us to work on more projects."

GOOGLE LOVES FAST WEBSITES

If the real estate mantra is "location, location, location," then the ecommerce one is "ranking, ranking, ranking." Search rankings make and break online retailers, which is why Sticker Mule closely follows SEO guidelines and best practices. Andre Oliveira explains that optimizing the speed of the website is the number one concern his team has. Over the years, the team has introduced some sensible guidelines, for example, imposing a limit of 300 KBs on images featured throughout the website and adding fields for metadata. However, the biggest gains in performance come from architectural decisions taken by the team.

The Sticker Mule website consists of two types of pages. Pages where visitors interact with the website (like order forms or shopping carts) are rendered on the fly and interact with the backend server in real time. Pages displaying static content (product descriptions or shipping rates) are rendered once and then stored on a network of servers around the world for quick access. When static pages are updated, the Sticker Mule team has to make sure that the stored copies are flushed and the latest version of

a page is copied throughout the content delivery network.

The advantages of combining dynamic and static content are compelling, but traditional CMSes are typically built with one specific approach in mind. This is where API-first architecture embraced by Contentful continues paying dividends. "We rely on Contentful's webhooks to ensure that cached content is invalidated the moment a new version of the entry is published," Andre Bernardes, a software engineer, explains. "And so far the process worked like a charm! In fact, once we saw the results from the new pages we published, we made the decision to move all of our static content to Contentful."

RESULTS

In the last two years, the Sticker Mule team has gone through a period of rapid growth: the company has added new products, entered new markets abroad and expanded its marketing. Adopting Contentful was instrumental in driving these efforts forward. It helped the company to resolve internal dependencies, leading to lower development costs and improved SEO capabilities. And it ushered in the culture of experimentation, where tricky questions are settled with light prototypes and quick experiments.

# Beauty Bay makes their ecommerce stack agile

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Beauty Bay is Europe's largest independent online beauty product retailer. The company's website handles a massive amount of content, with over 10,000 products from over 200 brands, as well as an online magazine and customer photos.

As the business grew, some of the company's aging technologies could not support the required agility required to evolve the company's website scale. The site used multiple systems to publish and manage content, including an ERP and enterprise search, and editors had to wait at least 24 hours to see changes. With a new microservices approach, the team combined Contentful with a modern ecommerce platform, Attraqt, to achieve much higher velocity.

With Contentful, the site update workflow has gone from 24 hours to 10 minutes, and new pages now take less than 40 minutes to deploy. Next, the team plans to move their online magazine to Contentful and start integrating rich editorial content into the ecommerce journey.
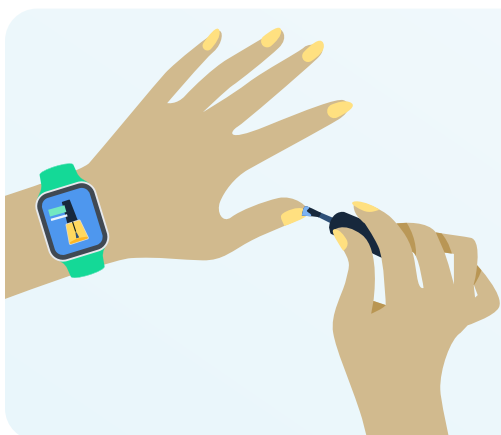
"Adopting Contentful's API-first technology means that we can retain the control of our core IP and manage our content in any shape or form, in an agile way. We are no longer shackled to a specific platform"

— Nik Southworth, CTO, Beauty Bay

BANG & OLUFSEN

## How Bang & Olufsen is making significant ecommerce gains

Bang & Olufsen leads the way in luxury audio-visual design and production. The Danish brand has been improving speakers, headphones, and televisions for more than 90 years — now reaching their customers through 700+ stores and multiple online channels. Their old monolithic ecommerce and CMS platform wasn't keeping up. A microservice stack with Contentful at the center has changed all that.

THE CHALLENGE

B&O wanted to meet their customers where they're at — in their regions and languages, on all their personal devices and in-store displays.

But they didn't have the tools to get there. They had one monolithic platform that included both their ecommerce tools and content management system. This setup limited their ability to connect with individual customers and communicate a consistent message across multiple
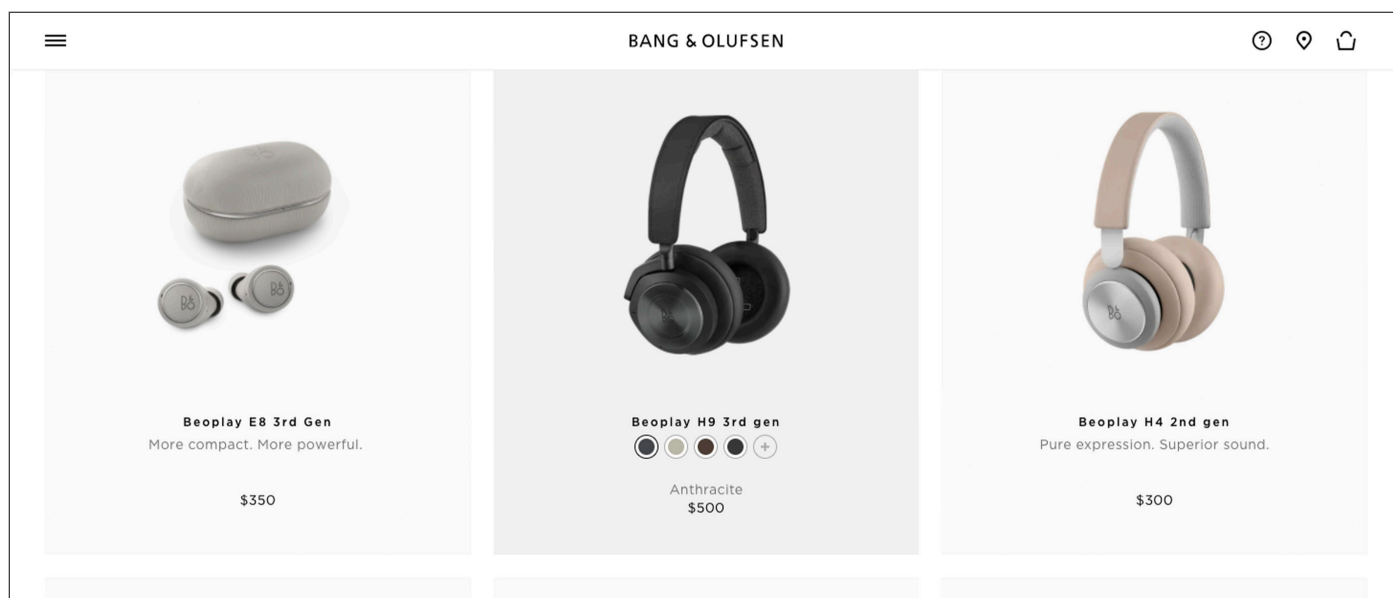
channels. Their product website and digital store were separate sites, and they struggled to connect online and through in-store sales systems. Despite the shared platform, nothing ran seamlessly.

MOVING FASTER WITH MICROSERVICES

A microservice structure with headless components solved B&O's problems. This deconstructed architecture gave them the necessary flexibility to design and implement customer experiences both online and in stores.

B&O deployed Contentful, which is built on AWS, as their content solution and Commercetools for ecommerce. Contentful's extensibility, quick response times, and simple ways of creating and supporting a range of content also motivated their decision to rebuild. The two services are built to work with other components. They not only work well together, but they enable B&O to expand with other microservices whenever needed.

Powered by Contentful and Commercetools, B&O merged their two websites into one. Now customers could learn about and purchase the latest products in one place. They also connected their ecommerce and all in-store IT systems. Contentful powers in-store digital experiences with consistent content, regardless of the store's presentation technology.

THE NUMBERS SAY IT ALL

Tomas Krag, director of ecommerce at B&O, says they've been tracking the numbers and they look great:

- Load times decreased from 16-20 seconds to 3-4 seconds
- Ecommerce conversion rate increased by 60%
- Cart-to-checkout rate of progression more than doubled
- Average order value increased by 13%
- Conversion rate from online store search is three times higher

KÄRCHER

Kärcher drives customer engagement with Contentful and Alexa Skills

Kärcher has manufactured functional, user-friendly, sophisticated cleaning products since 1935. Kärcher wanted to be the first in its field to give customers the ability to ask questions and control devices using voice control. Their commitment to digital transformation led them to develop Alexa Skills. They enlisted the Kärcher Digital Innovation Hub and Zoi TechCon GmbH to tackle the challenge. Amazon provided the framework and hardware, and Kärcher had all the information ready to be embedded into the skills. However, the real challenge was how to handle the content storage, management and delivery.

BUILDING ALEXA SKILLS WITH CONTENTFUL

Content models need to meet the standards of the voice provider and remain accessible to editors. If the models are not built correctly, Alexa cannot

process prompts nor return the requested information. Editors need to publish content in several languages and have long-term, easy access to it, especially if updates are needed.

Zoi handled the market research with a cross-functional team. After a series of reviews, they chose Contentful for its flexibility, security and user-friendly interface to solve the content challenge. The team began by building a proof of concept before moving on to creating a content model for the full-scale project.

After building the content model, Zoi developers were able to work simultaneously with Kärcher editors. The developers connected the GraphQL Content API and the Alexa API, which let editors manage voice content in the custom content model through the Contentful web app. Editors began rewriting and

condensing content. For voice assistance, brief statements are preferable (it's far easier to read long sentences than listen to them).

With their content stored in Contentful, iterating was painless. The team ran through three additional iterations of the content model with user testing. Working this way enabled them to continually make any necessary adjustments. They learned helpful, unexpected information this way. For example, slot values can only be used once. Using the same word multiple times caused Alexa to stall.

ASK ALEXA FOR KÄCHER CLEANING TIPS AND CONTROL DEVICES VIA VOICE CONTROL

With Contentful, Kärcher developed and released two Alexa Skills. Want to control the irrigation in your garden or find the right high-pressure washer? It's simple. The first Kärcher Alexa Skill allows you to control the Watering System Duo Smart Kit with Alexa. And, discovering the perfect Kärcher product or cleaning advice has never been easier with the Kärcher Info Skill.

Ease of localization in Contentful makes scaling across markets and languages

simple. The Control Device Skill is now available in four markets and three languages: German, English and French. The Content Skill is also available in several markets and in two languages: German and English. Their content can now be reused chatbots and the Kärcher IoT-enabled machines.

"The integration of Contentful reduced the complexity of our architecture due to the excellent API and technical documentation in combination with the convenient backend for data modeling."

— Jens Hildenbrand, program portfolio manager ecommerce & customer journey, Kärcher

KEY LEARNINGS

- Test repetitively with real people. Include feedback from users testing the product from the beginning of development. This process ensures your product remains user friendly and solves actual challenges.

- Voice systems are built on different content structures than traditional apps and websites. They can also be used in chatbots and help pages. Limiting the content length is critical.

- Minimize complexity in your content structure to reduce barriers between editors and content.

Glossier.

How Glossier is building the ecommerce stack of tomorrow

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Glossier is a back-to-basics, beauty company with a product portfolio that spans from skincare, makeup, body care and fragrance. It is a digitally native beauty brand that has built a cult of following, particularly among millennials. Like any direct-to-consumer company, content is a huge part of what Glossier does. What made Glossier really stand out is their belief that "brands of the future will be co-created." Its goal is to connect to real people, rather than just selling or advertising.

BRINGING CONTENT TOGETHER WITH COMMERCE

Unlike traditional beauty brands, Glossier started with content and then moved to commerce. For Glossier, content is the lens through which they create and sell new products, launch in new markets, and generate energy with their brand

– it's at the heart of what Glossier does. Into the Gloss is the blog where Glossier originally started and continues to build a thriving community for customers to share, discover and discuss their beauty routines and favorite products. In 2015, Glossier launched glossier.com, its commerce site for customers to buy and review products. Glossier is creating a people-powered ecosystem platform with content spanning from columns by Glossier ambassadors to blogs, Instagram, podcast, video, and website content, just to name a few.

When it comes to content and commerce, "Consumers face a very disconnected shopping experience where they try to collect all this information together when they are trying to make a purchase decision, and we want to break that hassle and ultimately deliver a more engaging and better customer experience," Bryan Mahoney, CTO at Glossier, says. "That's

why we want to put the power of content creation and curation all under one roof."

What comes as a huge opportunity also brings new challenges. With the great success and scale of Glossier, the old architecture and framework built on a traditional monolithic platform cannot accommodate its needs anymore. For example, Into the Gloss has some 1.5 million unique visitors every single day, and the framework used for glossier.com was built to facilitate transactions instead of content, which is not working for them anymore. "We found ourselves over time introducing 10, 15, 20 custom attributes to the data model to add more content, and suddenly getting much closer to a monolith, which was what we wanted to avoid from day one," Mahoney says.

> **"By using Contentful, our engineering team can focus much more on value-added features to drive better customer engagement, rather than spending time to create and maintain CMS infrastructures. We moved away from a statically generated site to a dynamically generated one."**
>
> — Bryan Mahoney, CTO, Glossier

ACHIEVING PORTABILITY AND FLEXIBILITY WITH CONTENTFUL

The Glossier team was very clear about what it was looking for. "We strongly believed in API first to encourage portability and flexibility, and that's how we can move our brand into the direction that our customers want, listen to their feedback and iterate quickly," Mahoney says. With some early successful pilot experience of Contentful on Into the Gloss the team decided to move quickly with Contentful on glossier.com as well. The workflow around introducing content changes is well understood, the solution is proven to be robust and scalable, and they decided to strip the commerce framework back down to its core. Now the team uses Contentful to manage any content instead of resorting to custom-built solutions.

By using Contentful, engineering hours can be dedicated to creating more value-added features and channels to engage customers, rather than to maintaining backend infrastructures like CMSes, or granting permissions to publish content. In particular, the engineering team is able to roll out complex A/B testing much faster so they can make the shopping experience more personalized for customers.
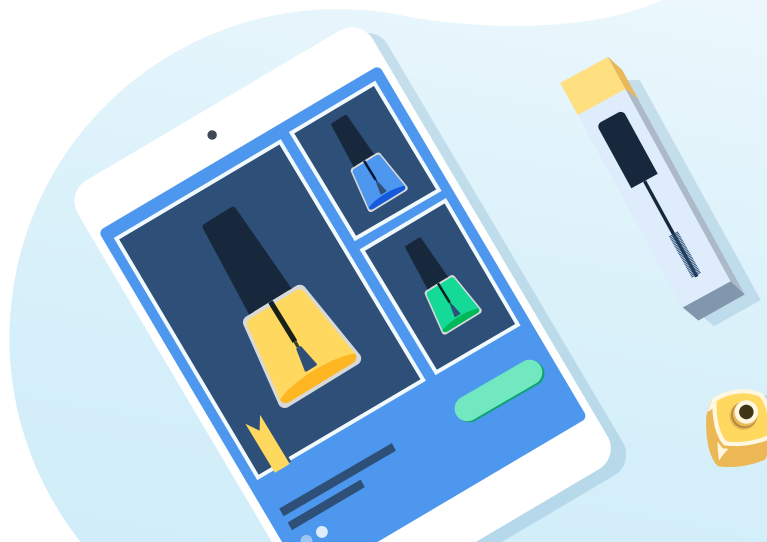
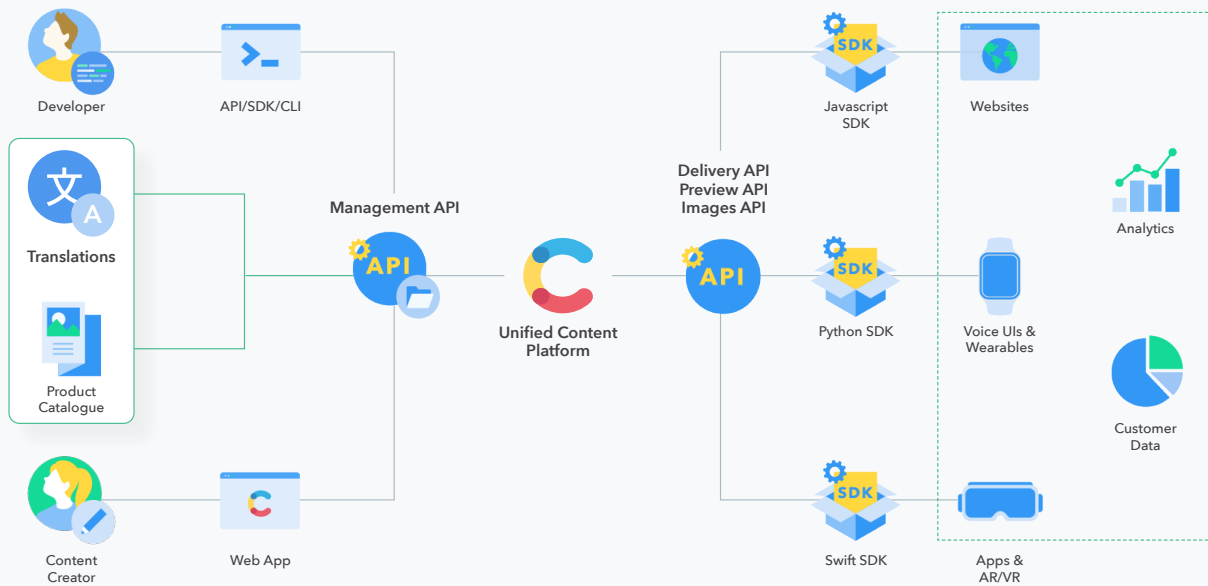# Content management platform designed for modern tech stack

With the rise of cloud computing, a wave of new technologies has emerged to address the needs of product teams for shipping and managing content. These solutions offer cloud-native, API-first platforms based on structured content models. They are programming language-agnostic and integrate seamlessly into modern application architectures.

At Contentful, we think headless is a good start, but there's more needed for teams to realize the power of platform software. Our content management platform includes APIs for content management, previewing, images and display to deliver on complex and unique demands for modern apps and websites.

The Contentful content management platform is purpose-built for the modern tech stack. Like other services within the stack, such as maps, payments or messaging, Contentful is a specialized platform as a service. It powers the flow of content between any number of applications and a central content repository, and provides tools to easily access and manage content within applications.

Contentful's content management platform is flexible enough to power any type of digital product, whether it's a website, app, device, or something new entirely.

Developer — API/SDK/CLI

Translations

Product Catalogue

Management API

Content Creator — Web App

Unified Content Platform

Delivery API
Preview API
Images API

Javascript SDK — Websites

Python SDK — Voice UIs & Wearables

Swift SDK — Apps & AR/VR

Analytics

Customer Data

Federate content from other systems

Integrate with data platforms

Join the Contentful journey with other top retailers

PELOTON UNDER ARMOUR LoyaltyOne bloomingdale's falabella. ARC'TERYX

HSE24 WITT WEIDEN zooplus BRAUN DW Daniel Wellington

BLICK art materials Etsy KINSLEY ARMELLE BRANDLESS™ STAPLES SDC

MERCARI ALDO Yoga Girl BEAUTYCOUNTER™ AUTO SCOUT24 Leen Bakker

HelloPrint™ High Park™ Intergamma SHOPRUNNER Intermarché Sainsbury's

nutranext ROOMS TO GO LEROY MERLIN GRASS ROOTS FARMERS' COOPERATIVE VERISHOP wehkamp

TRANSFORMCO ADOREBEAUTY Augustinus Bader CharlotteTilbury

Contentful is purpose-built to help retailers tackle the challenges of new business and new content. It helps digital teams power content across their websites, apps, and devices to engage customers. Unlike a traditional CMS, the platform integrates with the modern software stack and your favorite cloud services. It offers a central hub for structured content, powerful management and delivery APIs and a customizable web app that enables developers and content creators to ship their products faster.

Contentful supports your teams' development styles and workflows. Developers can easily integrate it with existing websites and apps using their favorite languages and frameworks – or quickly spin up a new project. Flexible content modeling and an intuitive UI give editors the structure and autonomy they require to create and iterate content as often as needed. With Contentful, your business can ship digital products and experiences faster, and keep them fresh with an ongoing pipeline of new content.
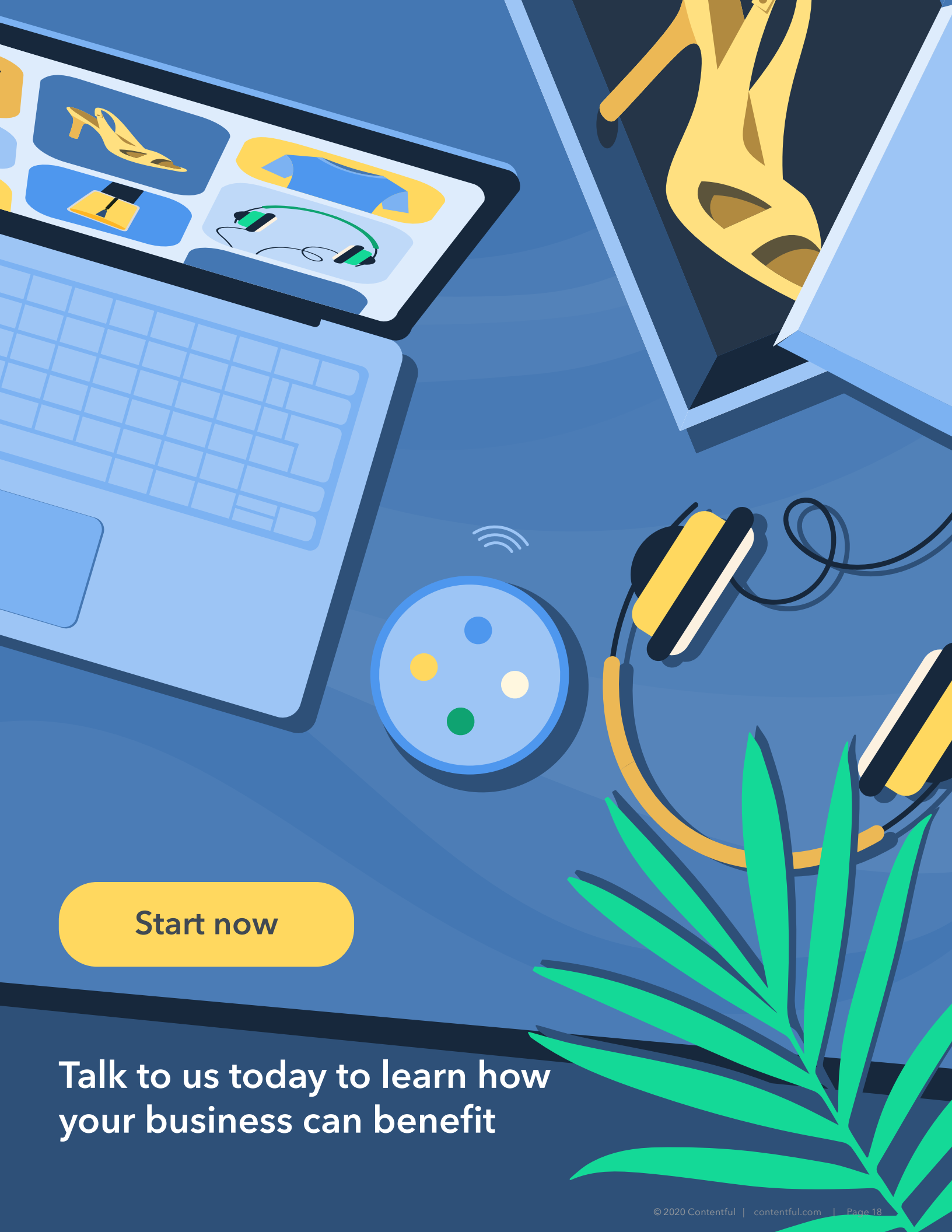
Start now

Talk to us today to learn how
your business can benefit