Contentful

The content strategy guide for digital marketing

Scale memorable content experiences with the right strategies and technologies

Customers expect brands to have an identifiable personality and style. They're also more likely to engage with brands that cater to their own preferences, including how they like to consume and engage with content. Customers today want tailored content experiences that span across the various digital devices and channels they use and are available when they want them. Every touchpoint, be it an ad, a social media post, or a connection with customer support, has the potential to generate a positive brand experience – if properly connected.

Marketers, content writers, editors, strategists, and other roles that create, curate, and manage digital content determine the experiences customers have with a brand on new and evolving digital channels. Too many times, however, these teams operate in informational, technological and procedural silos. Not only are these processes inefficient – they also make brands susceptible to inconsistencies across their content and unconnected content experiences, which customers are often the first to notice.

Fortunately, there's a better, more efficient way to make sure every brand experience is consistent and enjoyable for customers. It requires modern marketers to first understand four key pillars of memorable content experiences and then apply the right strategies and technologies to scale those best practices to keep pace with an expanding digital ecosystem. In this guide, we define each pillar, offer ways to align it to strategy and technology, and show how Contentful customers are putting these concepts into action.
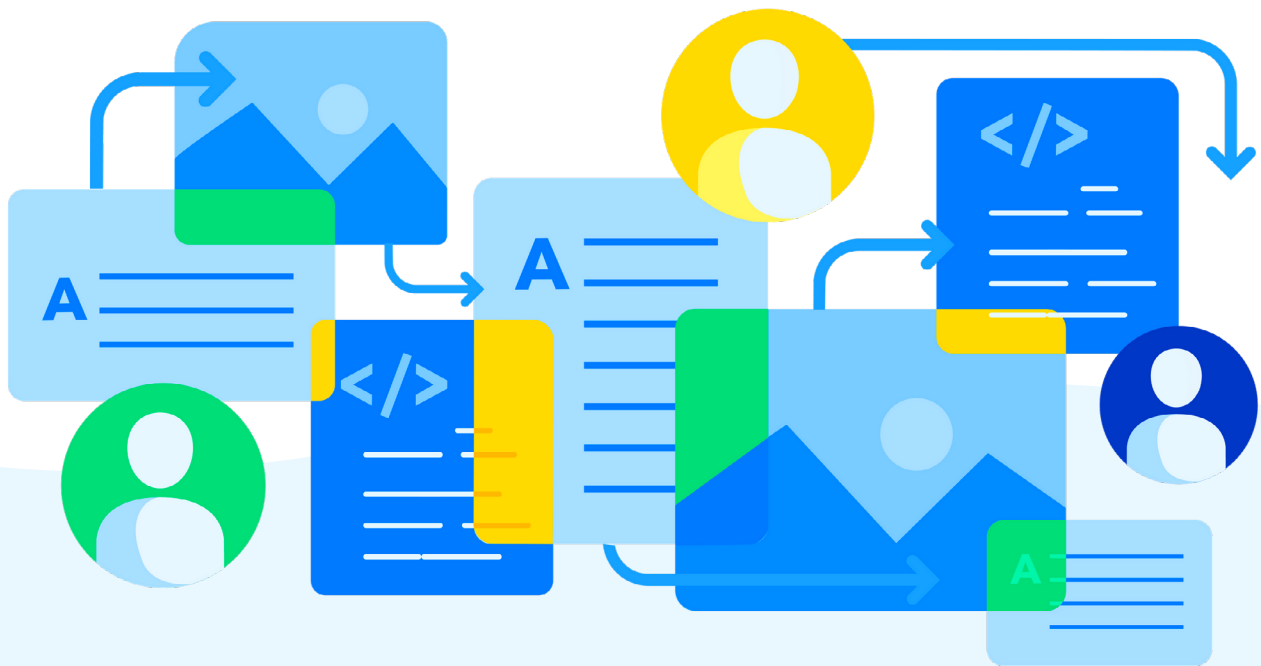
4 pillars of memorable content experiences

If each experience you deliver to customers has the following four elements, the result will be a long-lasting, strong relationship with your brand.

RELEVANCE

Customers seek personalized content and they want it to be available on their favorite channels. Brands must be able to target content by device, location, and user preference to create effective personalized experiences.

CONSISTENCY

Each brand touchpoint should build on a customer's overall experience with the brand. Those visiting a website, mobile app, or ecommerce storefront don't care who manages products, localizes content, or manages delivery. They expect a unified voice and clear brand identity with every encounter.

CREATIVITY

Attention spans are short. To keep customers engaged, brands must imagine, build, and deliver experiences that are unique, and perhaps unexpected.

SPEED

Customers are trend-hungry — they're always looking for the next big thing. If a brand can't deliver on what's up and coming in its industry, another will. Their teams need workflows and tools that allow them to quickly respond to market trends and customer desires.

Personalized content delivers better results

Big brands like Amazon, Netflix, and Spotify are setting the bar for personalized content — and it's high. With many individuals familiar with these brands, the pressure to align with the experiences they offer is great. Customers expect more than recognition across devices and channels, they expect special offers and content recommendations that are informed by their previous browsing and buying patterns.

While the concept itself isn't new, personalization is still something most brands are working to master — and the urgency to do so is only increasing. Personalization has gone from being considered a "nice touch" to a "must-have."

> "If brands fail to offer a personalized experience, 45% of consumers say they'll take their business elsewhere."
>
> **Segment**
> 2020 State of Personalization Report

This type of dropoff has significant business impact. According to Forrester's report "How Customer Experience Drives Business Growth, 2020," even the smallest improvement to customer experience can increase a company's annual revenue by anywhere from $26 million to $1.1 billion dollars, depending on the size of your business. These data points should encourage brands to reframe and reprioritize personalization, moving it from "side hustle" to "survival tactic" and "money-maker."

The starting line for personalization efforts isn't often well drawn out. Our "Personalization strategy workbook" outlines steps and tactics to help you, from first launch through iteration.

Download the workbook

Strategies and technologies
Implement structured content to enable reuse and iteration

Creating one-off pieces of content for every persona, device, channel and stage of funnel across the customer journey is not scalable. Structured content is a way of working that breaks down content into portable, reusable pieces that are organized outside of any one presentation layer. For example, a campaign landing page is often several hundred words of prose, i.e., unstructured content. To replicate this page, marketers have to manually copy and paste the content into a new page and then edit it for different audiences. Structured content deconstructs that content into reusable components like title, blurbs, key takeaways, customer testimonials, hero image, CTAs, etc., that can be reconstructed across any number of landing pages and tailored to a specific audience. This is how modern digital teams are keeping up with the increased demand for personalized content experiences.

All content used and stored in a content platform like Contentful is considered structured since it is sorted using this method. Teams looking to lighten their manual workload by reducing tiresome, repetitive processes such as copying and pasting should implement a structured content approach.

COSTA
COFFEE

Costa Coffee uses structured content to tailor content for market-specific sites

While Costa Coffee relies on Google Translate to speak customers' languages, they speak to market-specific preferences via individualized websites. According to Sezin Cagil, Agile Delivery Manager at Costa Coffee, "Each site follows the same brand guidelines but they are unique to each market. For example, the Japanese market – we're technical about their coffee, they want to see the details of where it's sourced and there's also nutritional information. In Germany, it's all about the experience – the smell and sound. Teams working for each market have the ability to customize the content and modules to these market-specific preferences." Structured content and module libraries let Costa Coffee reuse and tweak content so personalization doesn't come at the price of productivity.

Read the full story

Adopt easy-to-integrate tools that close content and data gaps

The key to personalization is technology integration. It requires managing a vast library of content that can be deployed based on a user's behavior and attributes. It also requires managing a stack of software like an analytics tool, personalization engine, and delivery platform that synthesizes user data and delivers content in a way that creates a unified experience for the customer. To go past superficial <firstname> personalization tactics, content, data, and technology need to integrate.

Integration is often a challenge for traditional, monolithic tools that attempt to do everything. Replacing legacy content and data systems with tools that integrate well with one another and emerging technology gives you a competitive advantage. By closing gaps between systems, you can leverage all of your data and tools to deliver a better brand experience.

You can start by choosing a content platform like Contentful that integrates with your existing tools – analytics, optimization, personalization, CRM, video, maps, etc. – and connects to all digital endpoints, including websites, apps, IoT, digital billboards, and more. This reduces redundancy and manual copy/paste labor, enabling you to focus on the experience they want to deliver instead of the logistics.

ALTUROS
destinations

Alturos Destinations connects its app to unique client tech stacks with one tool

When Swiss tourism information and technology company Alturos Destinations came up with the idea for Destination OS, a travel app and ecommerce shop that offers a variety of travel experiences, it knew it would need not one or a few, but many tools to be fully operational. The company introduced Contentful to support omnichannel delivery and ensure the app would easily integrate with diverse client tech stacks. Brands looking to connect purpose-built personalization tools with the technology they already have in place can expect similar success with the introduction of a content platform such as Contentful.

Read the full story

Connected content creates a strong brand identity

A strong brand identity is a thread that ties all marketing channels together. It can maximize the impact customers experience upon brand introduction and build brand recognition and appreciation from thereon. When all touchpoints align, brands speak powerfully with a unified voice – customers not only hear it, but they actually listen and react to it.

When you consider what makes a brand recognizable, its logo, color palette, and typography might likely come to mind first. Holistic brand guidelines move beyond this to outline the tone of voice of the written word and the visual identity of brand and product imagery. As many brands come to realize, the true challenge is not defining brand standards but ensuring those standards are reflected across all the content that is produced.

In the scope of technology, traditional CMSes often fail to harmonize content across channels. Most can't deliver content to multiple applications, such as a website and mobile application, requiring brands to adopt additional systems and quality-control responsibilities. With this setup, mistakes are all too frequent – you're likely to discover a page using old copy and design elements, or spot an error that was fixed in one place, but not on the five other pages where that same copy lives. When you have to wrangle content on multiple CMSes or different teams use different tools within those channels, it results in a fragmented brand that struggles to communicate with, engage, and retain consumers.

A modern alternative to monoliths, content platforms structure your content for reuse with structured content and content models. Check out our "Content reusability workbook" for insight on each concept.

Download the workbook

Take a COPE (create once, publish everywhere) approach

Consistency is a challenge when content is managed across multiple systems, requiring content editors to make manual changes everywhere rather than in a central location. Modern companies are looking to headless and microservice architecture solutions that provide flexibility and scalability, in addition to consistency.

Contentful's content platform stores content in a single hub and structures it for delivery to any digital endpoint. Consistency ceases to be a challenge because every endpoint pulls content and design elements from one up-to-date source. In this way, content and design elements become reusable and can be mixed and matched. Any updates made within the platform will be pushed to the channels and applications where that same content is referenced. Everything stays in sync whether a small copy edit or a major brand refresh.

TRUNK CLUB
A NORDSTROM COMPANY

Trunk Club eliminates repetitive manual processes with a smart content hub

Before switching to Contentful, Nordstrom Trunk Club (the luxury department store chain's personalized styling service) had a group of editors tasked with keeping their style guide content consistent on multiple devices powered by two separate CMSes. The work was highly redundant, and copying and pasting content wasted huge amounts of time. With Contentful, the Trunk Club team can craft, test, and optimize content for every device in one place. The brand has even connected Contentful to Slack via webhooks so teams are automatically reminded to carry out what few managerial content tasks still do exist.

[Read the full story](#)

Prioritize scalability in your strategy and technology

When thinking about how to manage content and plan your digital strategy, it's important to consider not only present needs but the future trajectory of your brand. New technologies are constantly emerging, giving customers more ways to access digital content. You should look for solutions that are flexible enough to deliver to every digital endpoint.

Contentful future-proofs your content by decoupling how you manage content and design elements from how you deliver them to customer touchpoints. Separating the two removes many of the obstacles that slow down the adoption of new platforms. Content is managed in your content platform and delivered to different endpoints via APIs.

It's easier to create pilot projects on new channels and scale them because content flows through your existing infrastructure and operations. There's no need to migrate content to another system, clean up markdown tags or rewrite content to fit device-specific requirements.

TUI

TUI Nordic supports editor and developer tech preferences with an API-first solution

TUI Nordic, part of one of the world's largest travel companies, deploys content dozens of times daily to keep country-specific websites up to date. As part of its initiative to create a "speed-oriented architecture," it replaced its traditional CMSes with Contentful. The result? TUI Nordic delivers content to expanded customer touchpoints five times faster than it was previously able to. Now TUI Nordic editors use a single interface to support editorial workflows and store content. And, because Contentful decouples data and presentation, individual teams can choose the technology best suited to quickly bring their experience to new touchpoints.

Read the full story

Deliver something unique

Everyone wants their brand to stand out — to deliver an experience that gets people talking and, in the digital space, clicking. To do that, you need to find ways to grab consumers' attention and then hold on to it.

Ron Marshall, President of Strategic Marketing firm Red Crow Marketing, ran a test on brand exposure to see if it was true that the average person sees 4,000–10,000 ads daily — a mindblowing statistic that was often thrown around with little evidence. Marshall counted almost 500 exposures before he even finished breakfast and ended the experiment there. Marshall was surprised to find that he was being sold to everywhere he looked. Like many, he came to tune out most advertising efforts, further proving the point that brands must pool their resources to support the most strategic efforts that capture attention.

Creativity and innovation take time. To give teams the capacity to experiment and iterate, brands need to adopt tools that streamline non-strategic tasks and create opportunities for creative collaboration.

Take the mental overhead out of managing the content lifecycle. Learn how in our white paper, "How structured content frees creative teams and unleashes their productivity"

Download the white paper

Find time to explore and experiment

In the quest to deliver "the next big thing," the challenge isn't a lack of great ideas, it's a lack of time and resources to pursue them. You need tools that streamline the administrative overhead of your digital builder's daily work, giving them more time to be creative and innovative.

Juggling multiple CMSes, navigating inefficient workflows, and managing too many disconnected technologies cuts into time that could be better spent ideating. The ideas that do take hold still have to run a gauntlet of challenges. Will the project require a lot of developer support? Can you use existing content or will it need to be recreated? Will a seemingly small change break something else?

moonpig

Moonpig's new platform gives developers time and resources to pursue passion projects

When developers at Moonpig switched from a monolithic CMS to a microservice architecture, they hoped to optimize their mobile site. The brand had no idea, however, that the new technology would also move the needle on experimental customer-focused projects. With Contentful, Moonpig saw a drop in site errors and broken code, and requests for content changes disappeared. In months, Moonpig had time to launch Group Cards and Card Editor, to help individuals customize their purchases — an offering not available with other retailers.

Read the full story

Select tools that enable out-of-the-box thinking

Developers have the ability to build their own tools and create amazing things. Marketers and content teams need tools that empower them to do the same. To help yourself and others on your team better serve your needs and working preferences, look for content solutions and other tools that remove limitations, encourage imagination, and challenge what you think is possible.

When working with an agency or developer, push for solutions that let your team manage content independently — without the agency as a gatekeeper. With the right tools, you can bring a brand to life. Not only is this good for your business, but empowering team members to do the creative work they love is also good for employee retention.

Eurovision Song Contest creates a virtual village with agency support

With mass gatherings restricted, the host of the 2021 Eurovision song contest, Rotterdam Festivals, had to figure out how to bring the magic of the Eurovision village to the online world. With support from the Tribe Company and DEPT®, festival attendees took part in a groundbreaking, Contentful-powered digital experience that featured an interactive 3-D map of prominent landmarks and a meeting place to live-stream performances. How did this space take shape on the backend? Developers relied on a JavaScript API to render and optimize graphics, Three.js, and WebGL to form the library and Contentful as the unifying content hub and platform.

[Read the full story](#)

Beat the competition with efficient workflows

Let's face it: Customer loyalty only stretches so far. The same goes for differentiated experiences. While you might want what's earth-shattering from time to time, reliability and speed never go out of style. Fortunately, you can cater to both preferences and become a customer's brand of choice by removing bottlenecks that slow content publishing and automating processes where possible. The end result here is improved go-to-market speed.

"Content teams will grow exponentially as more organizations understand the need for top-notch, in-house content creators to lead their efforts. Within long-running content marketing initiatives, we'll also see more experimentation and agile iteration, all of which will be enabled by a jump in the number of content teams using agile approaches to manage their work," Andrea Fryrear, Founder and Chief Content Officer at Fox Content, shared. Should her prediction turn out to be true, brands will need to prioritize replacing cumbersome systems that restrict teams to waterfall workflows with agile stacks that allow for parallel workflows.

The first step to building experiences that disrupt is aligning your team, strategy, and tech. We detail how to do so in our white paper, "How to deliver digital experiences at the speed of opportunity."

Download the white paper
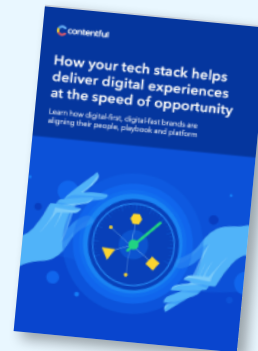
Remove bottlenecks by introducing parallel workflows

Waterfall or sequential workflows, where each person does their part before the next task, add hours and days to project timelines. At every handoff, time is lost transferring knowledge, correcting miscommunication, and waiting around for one team to finish before another can start. Decentralized content management creates many coordination challenges. For example, marketing might need to ask multiple product, channel, or regional managers to update content for a campaign, increasing the risk of errors when launching multi-channel campaigns.

A content platform promotes agility and helps you better manage, preview, and publish content all from a single, intuitive editorial interface. No more back and forth with developers to make copy changes or endless hours wasted copying content between systems. Marketers can directly update content and push it to whichever channels they choose within minutes. What's more, marketers can manage content across channels, ensuring that multi-platform brand experiences are synchronized and consistent.

VR GROUP

For VR Group, Contentful digital experience delivery is a streamlined team sport

Before Contentful, VR Group was all too familiar with underperforming sites and siloed teams. Today, the platform connects VR Group's seven other systems and 70 geographically dispersed users. With individuals of different teams — marketing, development, sales, administration — working within the platform daily or on occasion, the opportunity to collaborate is always available.

"We know it's sappy, but for us, Contentful's been a tool that really helps people work together and gets them to understand varying points of view," Amanda Kailio, Portfolio Lead with VR Group shared. In collaborating closely with content creators, VR Group developers are finding areas where they can extend the platform to further streamline content creation, publishing, and management. These changes have measured impact on business KPIs, improving customer retention rates, lifetime value, and overall customer satisfaction.

[Read the full story](#)

Automate marketing operations

Content powers every brand experience, from the smallest line of web copy to fully interactive digital screens. Content bottlenecks delay innovative campaigns and new product ideas — which doesn't work in today's highly competitive digital market. Companies with efficient content operations gain a competitive edge by moving faster and experimenting without sacrificing quality.

A flexible content platform helps streamline content operations and improves workflows so you can create and launch new brand experiences faster. What's more, by giving marketers more control over content, you empower them to be bold and try new things. It's much easier to iterate and optimize when you can make changes in minutes. Marketers are able to be more responsive and act quickly on performance data and market trends. Contentful has powerful APIs to consume, manage, and automate your content.

Staples

Staples Canada leverages scheduled publishing to score big on Cyber Monday

In 2019, Staples overhauled its platform, combining Contentful and Shopify to support its ecommerce platform and blog. When Contentful app Compose launched in 2021, Staples Canada put it to use immediately, scheduling promotions to automatically drop at midnight in preparation for Cyber Monday. Moreover, they were able to quickly tweak the promotion to offer more competitive pricing.

"Contentful allowed us to turn around a completely different promotion in just two days — and that weekend was a very busy, hectic weekend, one of the busiest of the entire year. It was a real win to be able to turn on a dime and do it better. Our customers were expecting something good on Monday, and we had it for them," Staples Canada's Senior Director for Product Management Jeff Serota shared.

[Read the full story](#)

Scale content experiences with a content platform

A content platform is the heart of a modern tech stack. It aggregates, structures, and delivers content across an organization's digital footprint. It has flexible APIs that enable businesses to build engaging experiences across markets and channels. An API-first platform integrates all of your technologies with a unified content hub that uses the MACH approach (microservices, API-first, composable and headless). This improves content orchestration for marketers and across the entire organization, as well as the customer journey. A content platform allows marketers to work in a single hub and streamlines content operations by making content reusable. When content works harder for your brand, digital marketers can spend less time managing content and more time adapting it to build memorable experiences that convert customers.

Content is the foundation of your brand. How you structure that content affects how you deliver it to customers. Structured content is the future – content should be able to flow seamlessly from creation to endpoint, without the limitations of traditional CMSes.

Pleasing both developers and marketers can be a challenge, so Contentful created interfaces that both teams love. The intuitive, marketing-friendly web app interface allows for editing on the fly, and testing new content is a breeze – no developers needed. It includes intuitive features to help teams work faster and integrate with their preferred tools. With a content platform like Contentful, marketers are empowered to create a content strategy that delivers memorable digital experiences that are personalized, relevant, and always on brand.
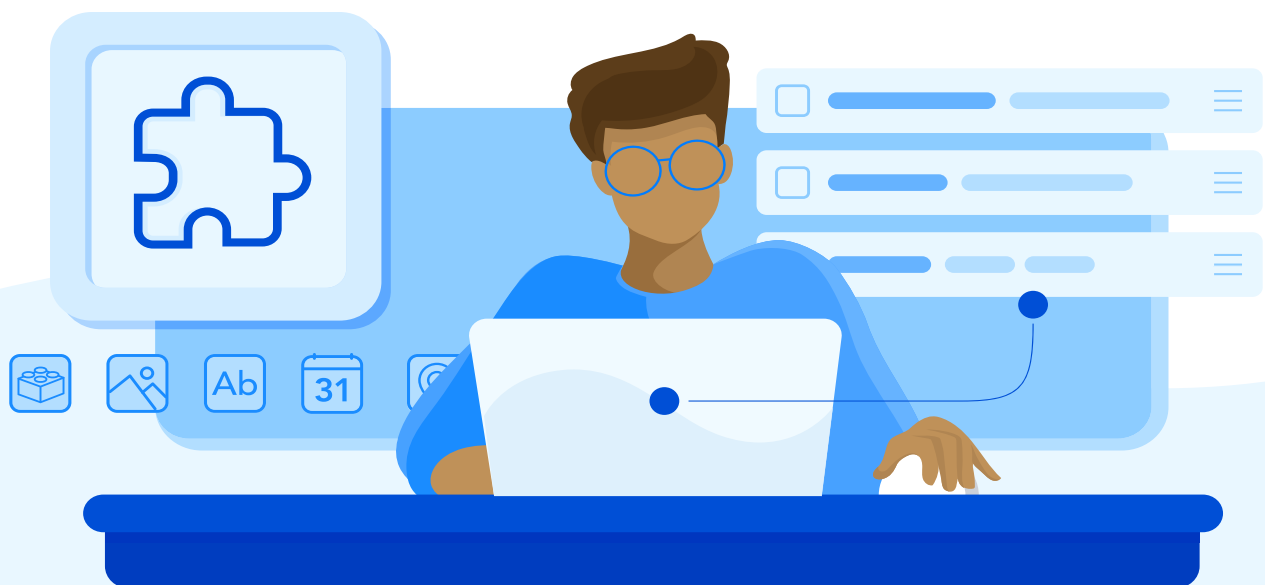
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