Playboy relies on Contentful to offer entertainment and lifestyle advice to million-strong audiences

PLAYBOY

Requirements

- Ability to reuse content across multiple apps and media properties
- User-friendly way of defining the structure of templates
- Reliable infrastructure for delivering content to mobile devices

Results

- A centralized platform for publishing content on any platform in real-time
- Easy-to-use content modelling tool with no limit on entity types
- High-availability cloud-service with round-the-clock human support

Launched by Hugh Hefner as a men's lifestyle magazine over 60 years ago, Playboy today is a media company producing content for print, online, TV, and the digital universe of websites, apps and interactive experiences. The iconic Rabbit Head logo is one of the most recognizable brands in the world, with Playboy-branded consumer products being sold in more than 180 countries and its digital network reaching over 50 million men per month worldwide.

Playboy approached the task of selecting a content management system (CMS) with one overriding criteria in mind: rather than locking its editorial team into the page-centric view of online publishing, the system should enable editors to create content that effortlessly adapts to any platform or device favored by Playboy readers. The Playmates.com website, powered by Contentful, quickly demonstrated practical benefits of the new approach and soon thereafter Playboy.com was relaunched on the same CMS.

Enabling Editors to Tell Their Story

Playboy's producers and creative collaborators routinely introduce new storytelling formats, cover trending topics, or run special features. As a result, editors expect their publishing workflow to accommodate new content type templates without derailing the tight schedule followed by the editorial team.

"Typical ways in which readers interact with, discover, and recommend our content evolve faster than traditional CMS vendors can adapt to these changes" notes Rachel Melville, Senior Director of Product Management. "Which is why it is so important for us to have control over how our content is structured and presented."

Replacing a behind-the-scenes, fiddly database setup - as found in most traditional publishing platforms - with a standard workflow made the Playboy editorial team highly agile. Cullie Laws, Senior Director of Digital Media Operations, explains: "Beyond saving us tons of time, the ability to define content structures independently means we can surprise our fans with innovative features and respond better to new trends in media distribution."
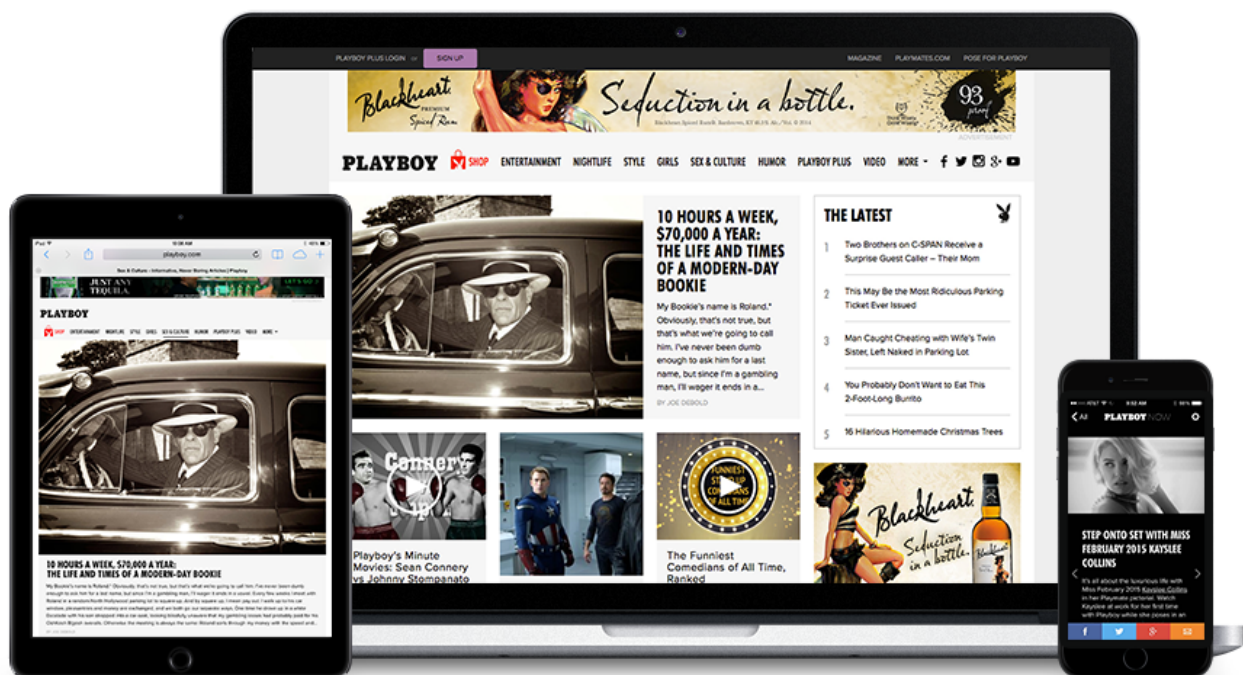
Managing Assets with Ease

Playmate galleries, humor cartoons and celebrity portraits form a unique and widely recognizable part of the Playboy experience. Today, the company's media archive consists of hundreds of thousands of files and continues to expand. Managing this vast collection of assets and adapting it for the realities of mobile browsing poses some unique challenges.

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Many of these concerns are addressed by out-of-the-box features found in Contentful. Purpose-built utilities simplify asset importing, smart algorithms and built-in tools enable image editing on the fly, and external integrations pave the way for video embeds. "We host, encode, and serve our videos from the Ooyala video platform. Being able to search for and preview these videos without even leaving my content editor has dramatically simplified our workflow," adds Rachel Melville.

Content for a Multi-Device Age

In the media business, producing quality content is just one piece of the puzzle. To be successful, companies also need to think about scalable ways of distributing this content. "As a global brand, we do not choose between desktop and mobile, Android and iOS, English, and Spanish. We want our readers to find us in any format, on any device, in any language", says Phillip Morelock, SVP and Chief Product Officer for Digital Media.

To meet these ambitions, Playboy chose Contentful to power the editorial content and media in its online properties and mobile apps. Since Contentful saves information in a structured way, removed from the presentation layer, content seamlessly adapts to whichever medium it's displayed in. Plus, by piping content through an API, the platform allows editors to publish new pieces on all linked apps simultaneously, in real time.

"Having one publish button for all websites, apps and device types is exactly what we looked for in a CMS," notes Rachel Melville. "No need to maintain multiple versions of an article. No painful delays in syncing content. No need to guess which images will break the small-screen layout. With Contentful, our contributors can abstract themselves from the technical nitty-gritty and focus instead on what they do best - entertaining and surprising the readers".