

The State of CMS 2025

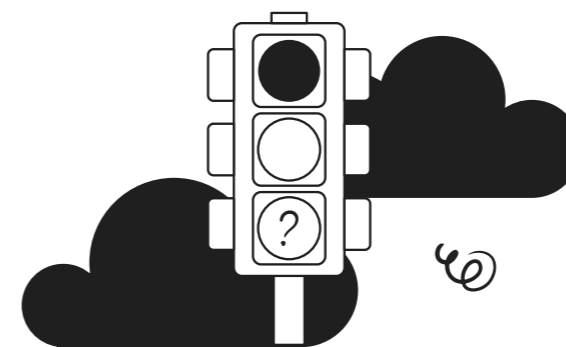
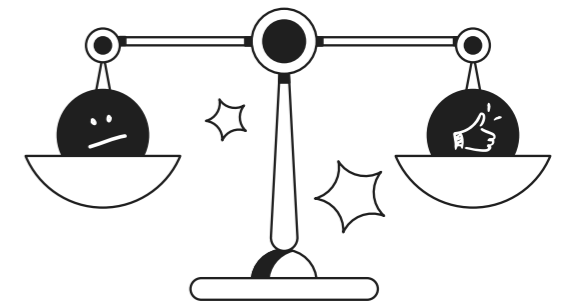
**How Higher Expectations and AI Are
Reshaping the Modern CMS Landscape**





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Executive Summary

Despite the pressures of changing technology, most users are still clinging to outdated systems. The 3 most used CMSs this year were **WordPress** (34% of all answers), **Adobe Experience Manager** (15%), and **Hubspot** (10%).



61%

of teams are still juggling **two or more CMSs** to manage their brands – and half of them are actively trying to escape.

Ease of use means more than ever. **Visual editing** is the most essential feature, cited by **65%** of users. Omnichannel and collaboration features remain crucial too though, tying for the second most essential features at 55% each.

CMSs that don't have AI are behind. Compared to 2024, **13%** more people listed AI capabilities as essential in their systems for 2025.

Automatic backups are ranked as the most essential CMS security feature (cited by **65%** of users), followed by **role-based access permissions** (**44%**), single sign-on (44%), and version control (42%).



41%

Underlying infrastructure issues make changing between legacy CMSs a negligible difference for many: **41%** of users who migrated recently felt that their problems were **partially, barely, or totally unsolved** by their new systems.

49%

Publishing is painfully slow. **49%** of users take over **an hour to publish their content**, with an additional 14% saying it takes them a day or more. That's a pipeline killer.

Time-consuming processes remain the biggest CMS pain point (experienced by **43%** of the sample), followed by security issues (**36%**) and adding new technologies (**32%**) – a predictable triad in a heavily monolithic sample.



AI-powered content creation was the most missed CMS feature (**44%**). Better content scaling took second place (**32%**), followed by dynamic content optimization (**30%**) in third.

Users indicate big plans for the Internet of Things (IoT): there's a 14% planned increase in voice-activated speaker distribution, plus a 15% planned increase for both AR/VR and smartwatches.

Headless CMS users aren't just happier. They're winning. **98%** of people who switched to headless experienced some kind of benefit.



The most popular benefit of a headless CMS was time-saving/productivity improvements (**69%**), followed by improved performance (**58%**), better user experience (**57%**), and better scaling (**53%**). Improved security (**50%**) and increased ROI (**41%**) were also present.

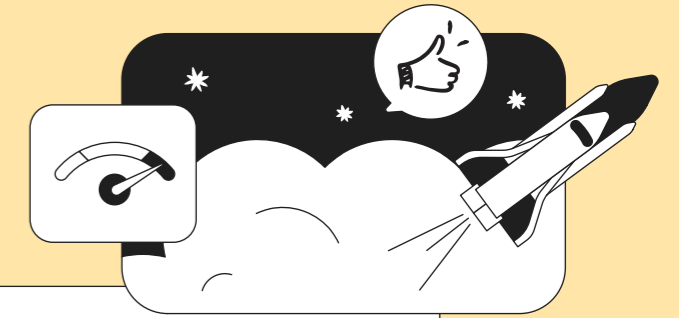
The real reason most people haven't embraced headless? An education gap. They just don't **know enough about it** (39%) – yet.

(39%)

Introduction

Personalization, omnichannel content, site performance — the list of CMS demands only grows longer. In every area touched by content management, yesterday's daydream has become today's baseline. And consumer expectations aren't just rising — they're accelerating, fueled by a tidal wave of AI innovation and digital transformation.

CMS users aren't asking for more; they need more — to stay relevant, to stay competitive, to keep up with a market that moves faster every day. The systems that once powered success are now the biggest barriers to it.



THE REAL QUESTION ISN'T JUST WHETHER TODAY'S CMSS ARE MEETING EXPECTATIONS — IT'S WHETHER BRANDS CAN AFFORD TO STAY LOYAL TO SYSTEMS THAT NO LONGER DELIVER.

THE ANSWER DEPENDS ON WHO YOU ASK — AND WHAT CMS THEY'RE USING.

The State of CMS 2025 is for anyone who wants to go beyond simple statistics and understand the bigger story of CMS usage in our modern age. This year, we polled over 1,300 real CMS users to learn not just how they use their systems, but why: the reasons they're adopted and abandoned, believed in and mistrusted, loved and hated. All signs point towards an electric industry full of both consumers and users who are eager for more.

But there's a dark current beneath all the potential. The vast majority of users are also feeling the pain of those expectations not being met: sluggish pipelines, difficult operations, missed opportunities, and more, all suffered at the hands of outdated CMSs. Up against the pressure of new technologies changing the core way consumers engage with content, CMS users are running out of time to break free from the legacy systems that are holding them back.

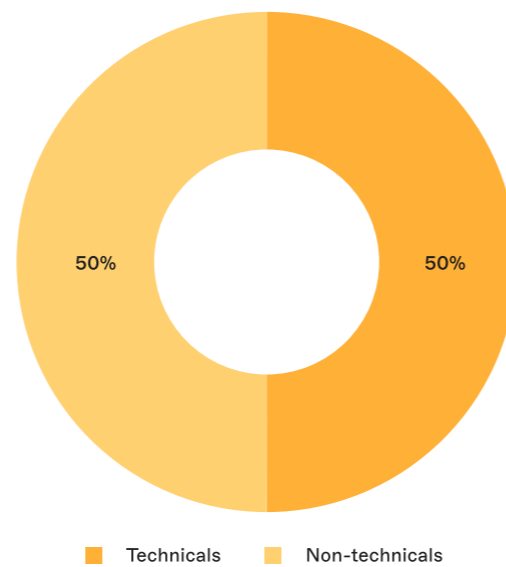
But we're getting ahead of ourselves. Let's start at the beginning.


PART ONE

Getting To Know CMS Users

Any good story starts with a healthy background. Let's kick things off by devoting time to the most important factor in the CMS equation: the users.

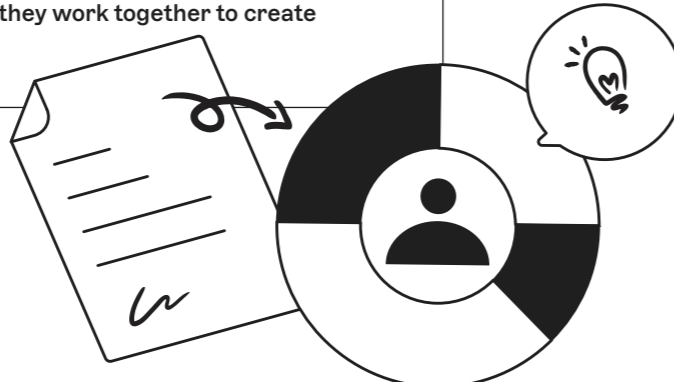
We wanted to know if our users considered themselves technical CMS users (such as developers and project managers) or non-technical (marketers, content creators, sales teams). While our sample from 2024 was a bit lopsided – you may recall the whopping 87% of technical users – this one was split perfectly down the middle.



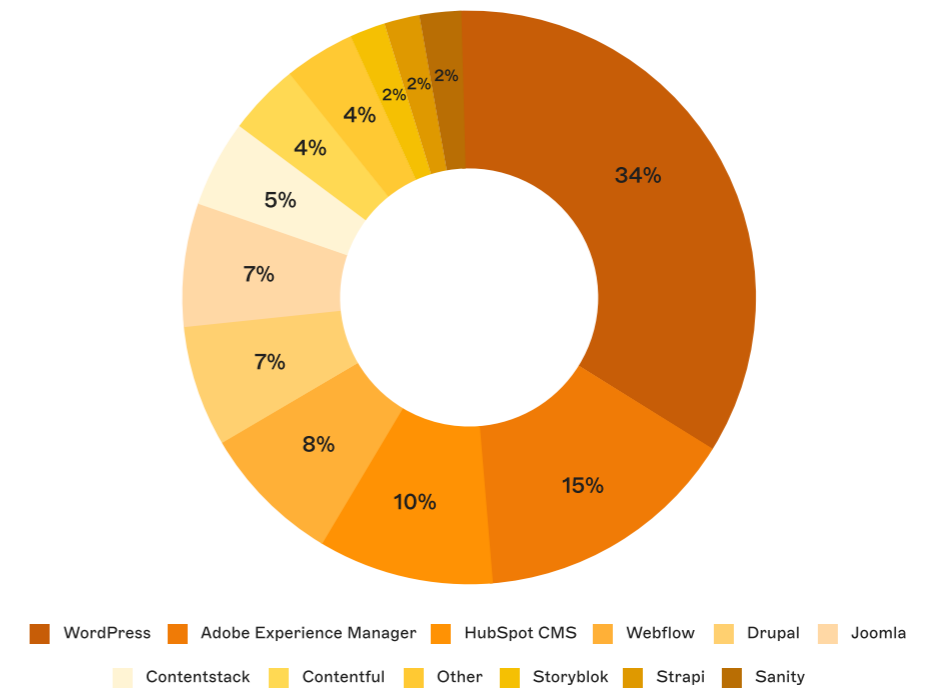


WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

This year, our data will be coming from a much larger percentage of non-technical users. Integrating their opinions and viewpoints gives us a bigger, fuller picture of how every kind of CMS user feels about their experience – and how they work together to create standout content.




The next thing to figure out was what CMSs they were using:



WordPress, perhaps unsurprisingly for anyone who has spent time on the nearly 44% of the internet that uses it, is still top dog. It claimed 34% of all answers, followed by Adobe Experience Manager (AEM) at 15%. Those of you who joined us for last year's State of CMS may remember these were also the top two in last year's sample,

speaking to the impressive usage of rates for both.

Then, we get to the difference. While last year's 3rd most popular option was Webflow, this year it fell to 4th place, switching positions with HubSpot CMS.



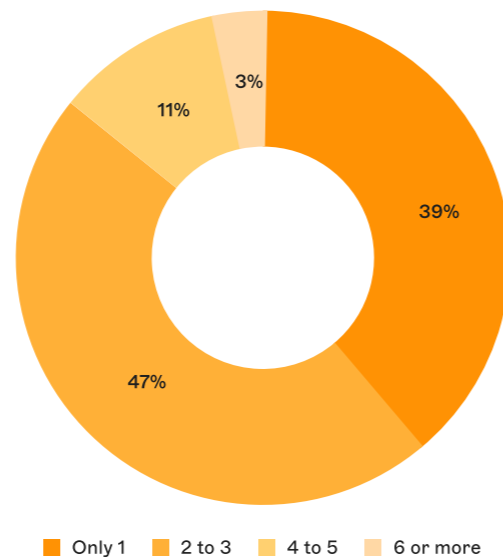
WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

This year's CMS sample comes overwhelmingly from monolithic users. That means we're getting more targeted data about how the majority is using these systems and how they feel about them. But – spoiler alert! – we made sure to ask the headless users a few dedicated questions too. You'll find those answers in Part IV.

For a little more background, we also wanted to know how many of these users were juggling multiple CMSs. In contrast to last year, we've got good news: more users are going steady with their systems, showing a 20% increase in users who rely on just a single CMS for all their content needs.

Why is that good news? Occam's razor: the simplest explanation is the one closest to the truth. Life is just easier when you're using only one CMS. The alternative is juggling multiple, which leaves you with a whole lot of issues:

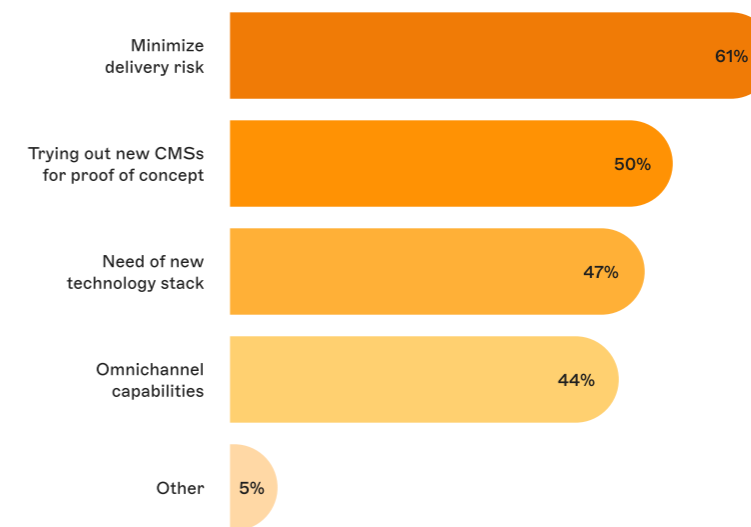
- **Overly complex operations.** Different systems, different limits, different capabilities – different *everything*. Even easy CMSs come with some kind of learning curve, and when you use more than one, you're only increasing it by that factor. Higher complexity + confused team members = a subpar experience for everyone involved.
- **Inconsistent content.** All those differences make it impossible for separate CMSs to operate in harmony. You're also siloing your content, which means anything that you want to go across channels will need to be done manually. Good luck remembering where you



uploaded that crucial document – with multiple CMSs, you're going to need it.

- **Less \$\$\$ in your pocket:** Multiplying CMSs may be a rudimentary way of multiplying your reach, but you know what else multiplies? Costs. Licensing, development, maintenance – all of it. It's the worst kind of financial déjà vu. anything that you want to go across channels will need to be done manually. Good luck remembering where you uploaded that crucial document – with multiple CMSs, you're going to need it.


But CMS users are no fools. They aren't exactly doing it for the thrill of managing disorganized content. They have good reasons:



For one thing, most of them are trying to minimize delivery risk. This typically means wanting to have backup systems in place, or thinking different CMSs are better fits for different frontend needs.

For another, monolithic systems don't have the same capacity for disseminating content that headless ones do. And this sample is heavily monolithic. Getting the reach they need requires sacrificing simplicity, as 44% of people shared with us.


Some also have their eyes on the horizon: migrations can be a pain, as we'll see later. It often makes the best sense with a big purchase like a CMS to try it out before



HEAR IT FROM THEM

Two users selected "Other" so they could write in and emphasize that their reason was, simply, "Legacy systems". Consider this foreshadowing...

you commit. It's not surprising that a good number of people are trying out different CMS and tech options with this tried-and-true strategy.

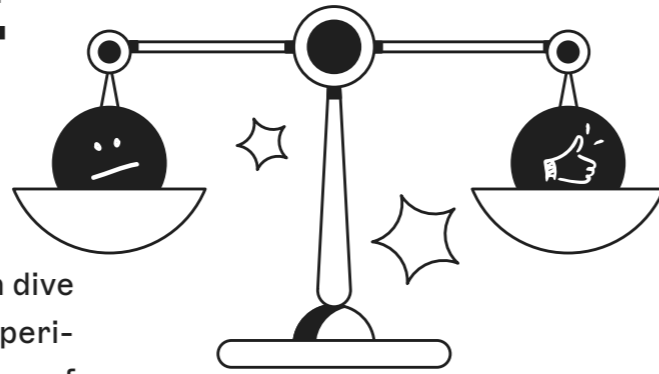


THE BIGGER PICTURE

These stats tell a bigger story in two parts. One: users are recognizing the need to provide omnichannel experiences to their customers. And two: they're testing the waters, trying out new proof of concepts to see if anything different fits the bill. This trend is far more than casual curiosity. It's a canary in a coal mine. Legacy CMSs, through a lack of technological flexibility and content agility, have a staggering number of users ready to jump ship. Stay tuned – we'll go into more detail in Part III.

PART TWO

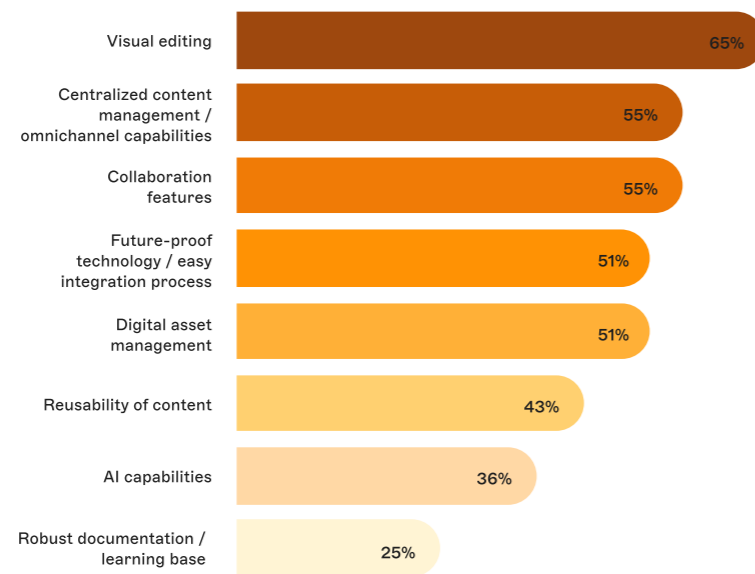
The Current Landscape



Now that we've met our sample, we can dive into how they feel about their CMS experience – and what that means for the future of CMS users everywhere.

The Good

What are today's CMSs doing right for their users? Even if there's room for improvement, knowing where providers are on the right track helps better understand the motivations behind those choices from earlier. And what better way to gauge that than figuring out what CMS features are most important to them?



The ranking of the most essential features uncovers a certain trend among modern content management system users: **ease of use**. Visual editing surged to the top this year, increasing 13% from 2024. Part of this is likely due to the increased non-technical

users in the sample, who are more likely to favor intuitive what-you-see-is-what-you-get editing. This explanation may also be a clue as to why documentation fell in importance by 12% – smaller dev sample, smaller representation of dev needs.



THE BIGGER PICTURE

Here begins a trend we'll see throughout this report: ease-of-use is clearly in vogue for 2025. But it isn't just about self-care and a smoother workday. Ease-of-use has a profound butterfly effect on your business's success. Think about it: easier operations mean faster workflows, better collaboration, and being able to realize the full potential of the tools you use. It's not just a perk for your teams – it's directly related to the value you can leverage from your work. Companies that don't prioritize it do so at their own expense.

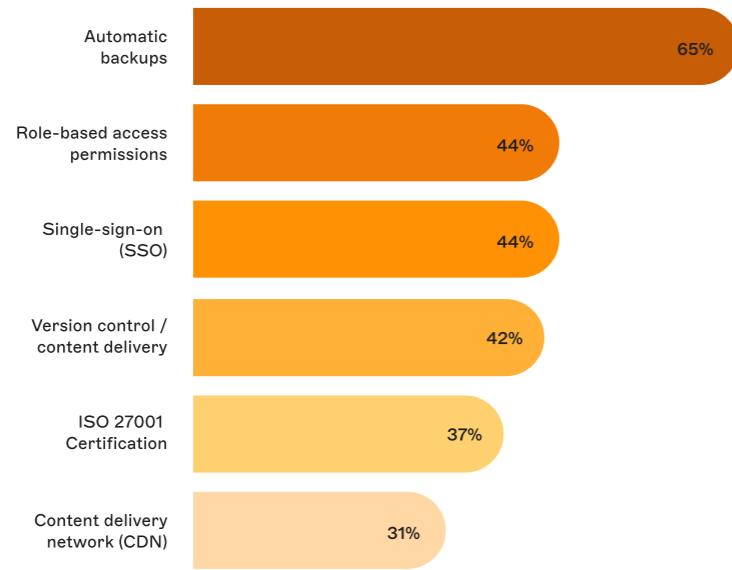
EXPERT INSIGHT

“ Storyblok's Visual Editor is a fit for a big consumer products brand like Wüsthof. When you are trying to sell something on a global scale, having something as simple as the visual editor allows you to see the big picture, visualize what's to come ahead, and connect our team with our customers a little closer.

Jamaliya Cobine, Executive Vice President of Direct to Consumer & Digital Marketing for Wüsthof

In other news, the desire for AI capabilities also shot up 13% from last year. Similar to ease-of-use, this is far beyond a surface-level trend. It points to a host of business opportunities – but only for those who can rise to the technical challenges this revolutionary feature presents. More details on that in Part III.

Cyber safety enthusiasts will notice a glaring flaw in that previous section: we didn't ask about security. So let's follow that up with an entire question dedicated to them: which security features do users find most important?



Automatic backups were the most essential security feature, cited by an impressive 65% of the sample. Having regular, reliable copies of their content that they can access in the event of a content emergency is clearly important to users.

With a few other options, we see shades of that ease-of-use trend again. Single Sign-On (SSO), while a huge security bump, also simplifies access and makes for one less login to remember. Similarly, the correct use of role-based access permissions can increase security while also streamlining internal workflows for the better.



HEAR IT FROM THEM

An option that several users highlighted in the open response field was two-factor authentication (2FA). This security measure requires two types of information to verify identity, like when you have to both enter a password and approve a notification sent to your phone. It's another testament to how significant the ease-of-use trend really is: more than a breezy feature, it's a security measure that seamlessly keeps everything a little safer.

Roughly a third of users were enthusiastic about features that operate more behind the scenes: ISO 27001 certification and Content Delivery Networks (CDNs). ISO 27001 is the leading international standard for the protection of data, while CDNs protect against a range of threats, including Distributed Denial of Service attacks (DDoS).

The lesser emphasis on these is likely due to the large proportion of non-technical users in the sample, who benefit from these security measures but are less likely to be as well-versed in their usage as their technical counterparts.



THE BIGGER PICTURE

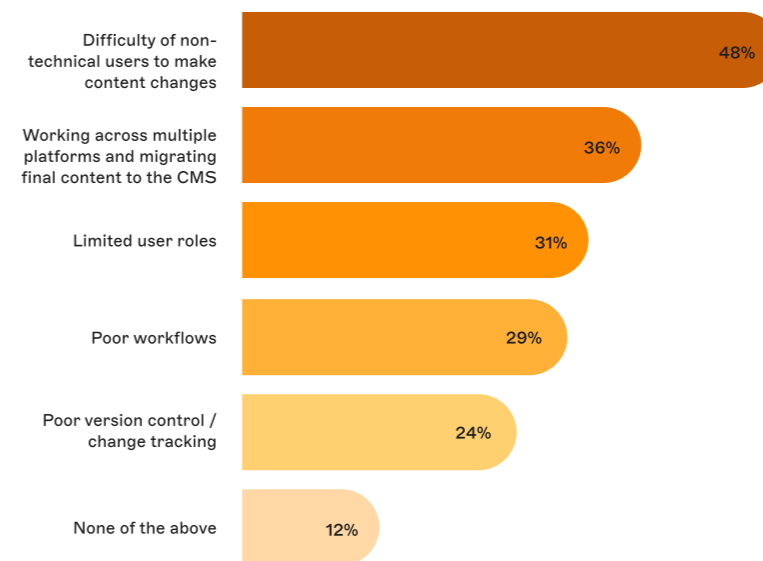
Security remains a big priority for 2025, but the more behind-the-scenes features fell lower on the list. Out of sight does not mean out of mind. It further emphasizes the importance of choosing a secure CMS, in both features and infrastructure. The more inherently safe your system is, the less work you'll have to put into keeping it that way.

EXPERT INSIGHT

“ Everyone should be aware that the security landscape has changed tremendously. There are so many new threats that are coming up.... it's becoming more and more complicated for us to defend against these attacks.

Sebastian Gierlinger, VP of Engineering


Let's turn to some more good news. Collaboration woes have decreased significantly in 2025, despite the less homogeneous sample. That's definitely a reason to celebrate.



Users were 12% less likely to report issues with poor version control, 9% less likely to struggle with limited user roles, and 3% more likely to report no issues at all. There was also a 12% dip in people struggling with multiple systems, which aligns nicely with the dip in multi-CMS usage we saw earlier. Everything's coming up roses for collaboration!

Unfortunately, that also means there are

thorns. One big one, actually: the **difficulty of non-technical users to make content changes**. This is the only factor that increased in 2025, with an additional 4% citing it as an issue. Nearly half of our heavily legacy sample suffers the ill effects of this roadblock. While this is likely influenced by the larger number of non-technical users, the bump suggests that even the technical users are well aware of this problem – and it's not going away.



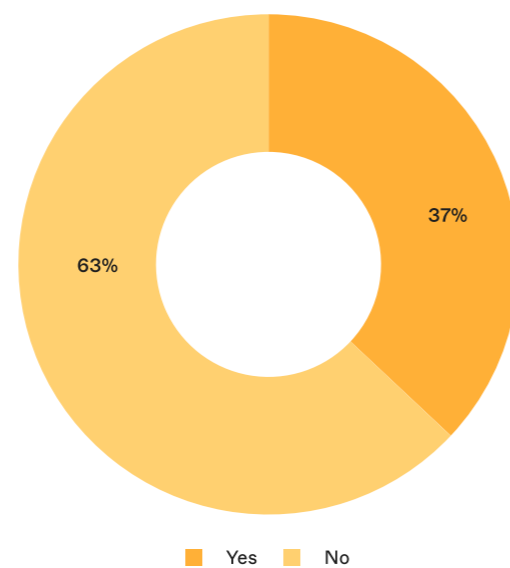
WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?


CMSs are improving their collaboration tools, but still struggle to provide tech that can truly break the unhealthy codependency between devs and marketers. Wrestling with content changes leads to frustrating delays, clogged pipelines, and missed business opportunities. Worst of all, this is a problem that scales right along with your business, rearing its ugly head every time you need to make a simple change. It's another reminder not to underestimate the power of an easy-to-use CMS.

There's also good news on the migration front. Far fewer people reported migrating to a new system in the past three years, down an astonishing 31%. But while this could be cause for celebration – people must like their systems if they're sticking around, right? – it could also be migration fatigue.

Migrations are tricky, complicated, expensive processes, even when you nail every step. Sometimes, even if you know your tech isn't working, the prospect of moving to a new system can be a heavy enough weight to tie you down to your current one.

It's understandable. But it's also important to realize that choosing to do nothing is still a choice. And it can come at a greater cost than the migration itself.





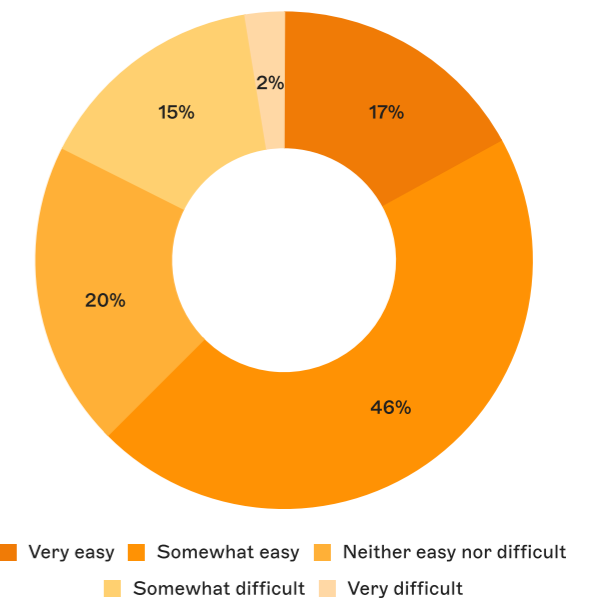
WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Check out [The Cost of Doing Nothing](#) for a deep dive on what that old system is really costing you. Here's a hint: stressed-out teams, technical potential, and a whole lot of cash.

To end this section on an optimistic note, there's another area in migration with promising stats. Users in this sample were a whopping 51% more likely to say it was easy or very easy to start using their new CMS after migration than last year.

Part of this is undoubtedly due to the larger number of monolithic systems in the sample. These simple setups are designed to appeal to generic needs. While that doesn't always give the power that modern businesses require, it does seem easier at the starting stages since there's less customization and technical needs upfront.

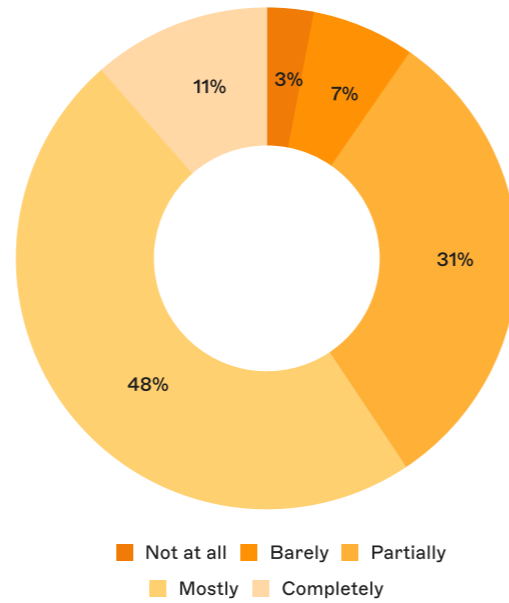
But that dime-a-dozen approach comes with its own pitfalls.



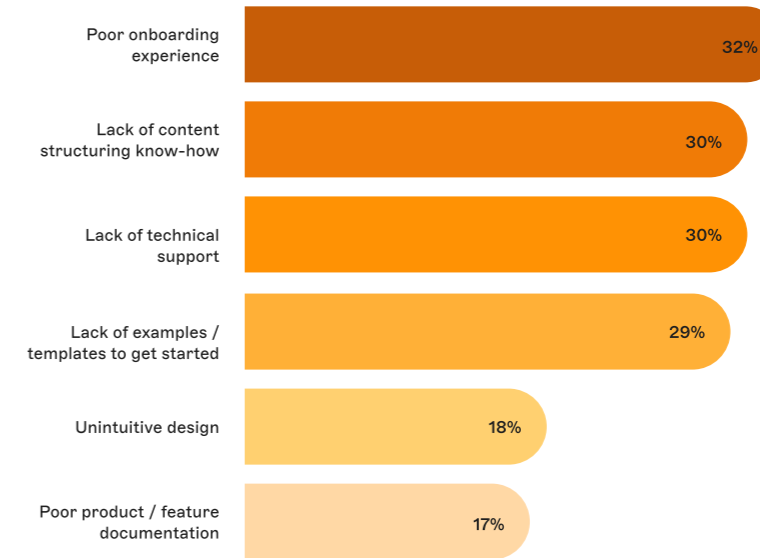
The Bad

Let's change gears and see what's holding our CMS users back in 2025, starting with those migrations. For those who made the switch recently: was it worth it? Did it work?

Well, it depends on who you ask. While the majority of people felt that migration mostly or completely resolved their issues with the original system, 41% of people felt it was only partially resolved or worse. Compared to 2024, these stats are definitely down: people are 19% more likely to rate their migration as only partially successful or worse in 2025.



And about that easy start... under the surface, it's a lot more complicated than it may appear. While 23% of users reported no migration roadblocks, the rest of them ran into at least one challenge:



THE BIGGER PICTURE

So, what's causing the decline in migration success? Legacy systems. They might be easier to get started with, but hopping between different monolithic options is like rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic: it might look different, but it won't solve the real problem. The architecture underpinning every legacy system just doesn't provide the speed, agility, or control necessary to thrive in modern markets. Users need to completely switch their mindset from the ground up and look beyond the generic, typical monolithic offerings for a more flexible, powerful infrastructure. Those who don't are doomed to smash into the iceberg.

The top issue, a poor onboarding experience, runs directly counter to the easy-start data from earlier. This may be a representation of the division of different job titles using the CMS: two users in the same company can have a very different experience with startup.

Lack of content structuring know-how was also a major issue, tied with a lack of technical support. This would suggest that even in a larger tech-user sample, there were still tech issues with the CMS that couldn't easily be fixed.

Don't worry though, there's enough pain to go around. The issue with a lack of templates or examples, most likely experienced by non-technical users, jumped by 11% this year.



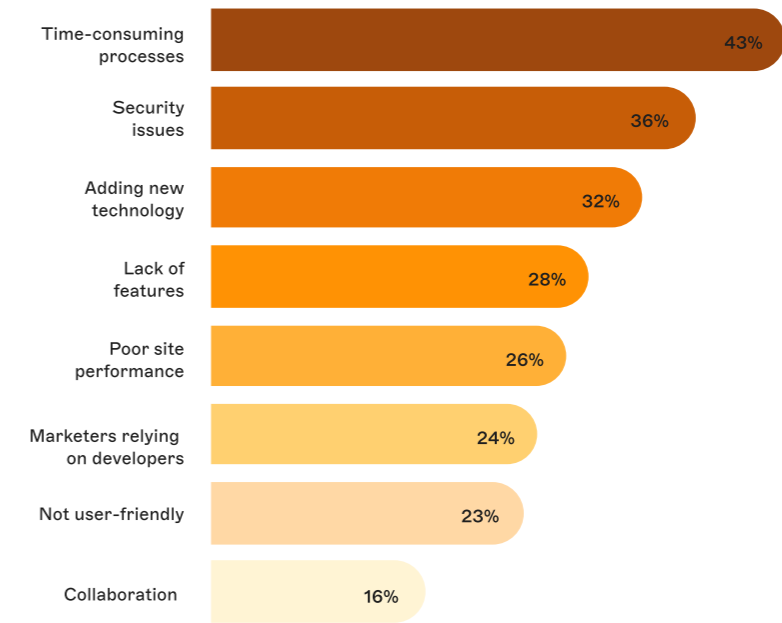
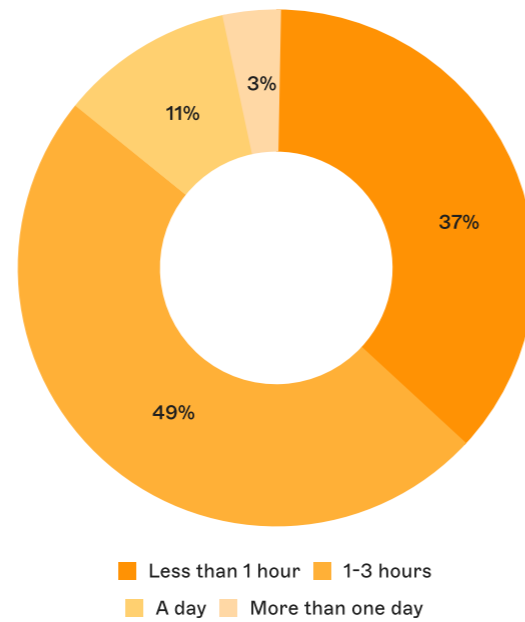
HEAR IT FROM THEM

One user signaled that they struggled with every single one of these during their migration. Many people selected more than one option, showing migration problems don't exist in a vacuum.

We'll close out this section with a new question for this year's study: "When all the assets are approved and ready to publish, how long does it take to publish a new page with your current CMS?" Or more simply: how efficient is your content delivery?

We'll sneak in some good news first: 37% of people can deliver content in less than 1 hour. That's enterprise-level, lightning-fast operations that get content to end users as efficiently as possible. Bravo!

Tragically, the victory is short-lived. The most popular answer was 1-3 hours, from 49% of users. A shocking 14% report it taking a day or more. Even if you're only on a few hours of publication delay, it adds up, especially if you're scaling.



Time-consuming processes were still the leading pain point, which we've already seen elements of in the question about publishing times. It's also a testament to how prevalent and deep-seated the problem is to remain consistent across samples.



THE BIGGER PICTURE

Maybe that doesn't seem like a lot now. But take a website that publishes content even once a day, and suffers roughly the same delay as most of our heavily legacy sample. Worst case scenario, that adds up to 1,095 hours spent twiddling your thumbs – over 45 straight days of delays!

And that's just with one publication a day. Scale that up to enterprise-level organizations publishing dozens, and you're practically immobile. Competitors with more agile systems will have all the time they need to run circles around yours. Legacy systems are setting their users up for death by a thousand delays – delays that competitors with modern CMSs aren't running into. Tick tock...



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Wasted time is far more than a minor annoyance. It's a major obstacle that costs you opportunities and revenue. Bad news for legacy CMS users: those clunky, slow operations are baked into a monolithic infrastructure. You can't have one without the other.

The Ugly

Let's talk about two areas that show where CMS users are feeling the pressure the most: **pain points** and **missing features**. Pain points were always going to end up in this section because, well, they're pain points. But this year, there were some eyebrow-raising changes.

The issue of adding new tech was down an appreciable 15%, but given that we have far fewer developers in this year's sample, it's probably just a reflection of there no longer being a majority of technical users, who are the ones who'll experience it the most.

The consequences of site performance are dire, including but not limited to:

- Higher bounce rates and fewer eyes on content
- Lower product sign-ups and conversion rates
- Bad SEO
- Security vulnerabilities
- Skyrocketing support costs
- Loss of quality brand reputation

Where this new mix of people was feeling the pinch, however, was in poor site performance. 9% more people than last year cited it as an issue they struggle with. In addition to being widespread, it's also a pain point that's likely to be felt strongly.


It only makes sense in an ever-competitive world that performance is at the top of the to-do list. But has poor site performance really gotten that much worse, even as technology supporting it has improved?

One explanation for this could be the heavily monolithic sample. Legacy systems are built on outdated tech at their core, so while there are some performance improvements that can be made, you're essentially stuck with whatever equipment you started with.

And as we see, adding new technology that could improve site performance remains an even *bigger issue*. So even if there's a tool promising to supercharge your performance, you need to struggle to get it integrated first. Another explanation is simply that standards continue to rise. Humans are, as a rule, remarkably adaptable. But unfortunately, we also adapt so that things that dazzled us

yesterday are the standard today. This could be the case: once you've experienced lightning-fast load times, it's hard to compromise even a few extra seconds.

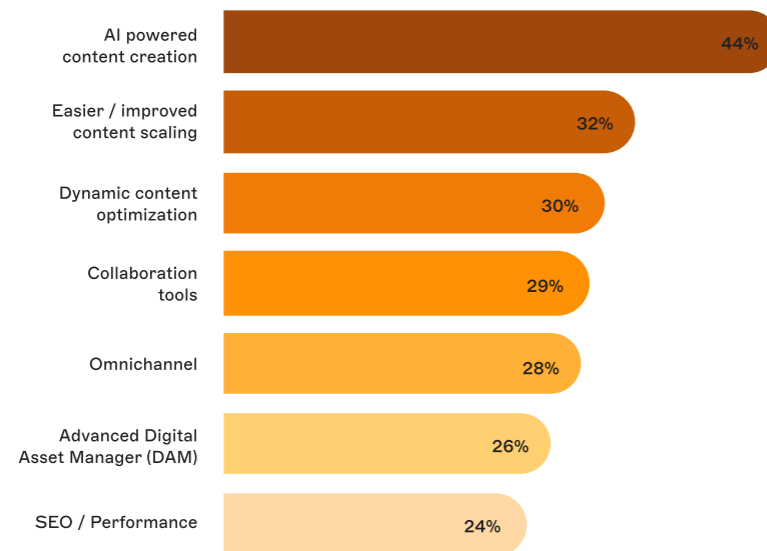
Not only are they consumers themselves, but they're faced with the herculean task of keeping up with rising standards in their industries. Talk about pressure. To be the best, you need to work with the best – and, at least where it concerns site performance, legacy systems are letting users down.



HEAR IT FROM THEM

Just like with migration issues, we had one poor soul who cited every single problem on this list. Hope you're doing ok, friend.

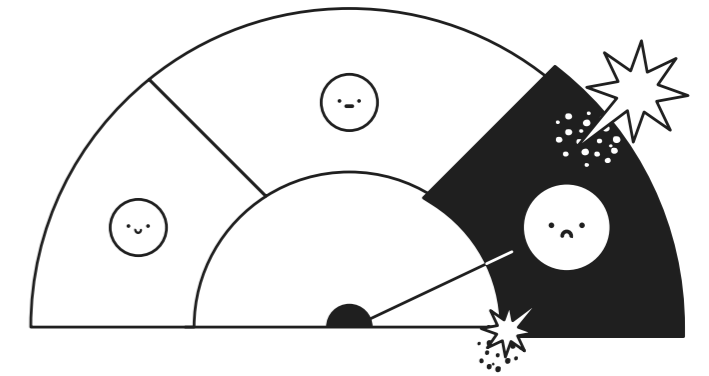
Now that we know what's causing people pain, let's look at deficiencies. Where do modern CMS users feel like providers could be doing more?



This year, we see the continued trend of prioritizing ease of use in the desire for AI-powered content creation, up 4% from 2024. Generative AI is a hot trend, and it seems most CMSs aren't picking it up as fast as users would like – it was by far the most popular answer.

More troublingly, improved content scaling came in second for the most missed. Scaling is an essential part of any business oriented

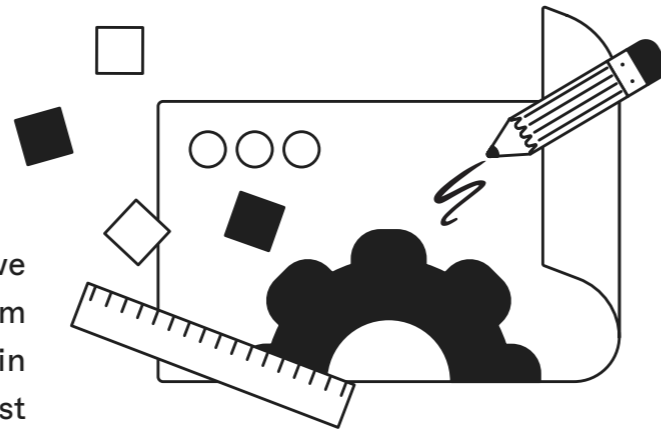
towards growth. If scaling is hard, complicated, or too resource-heavy, you're unlikely to do it, and your business will be stuck in the same place it started. Such basic CMS functionality being labeled "missing" by 32% is a bit disheartening.



PART THREE

Big Plans

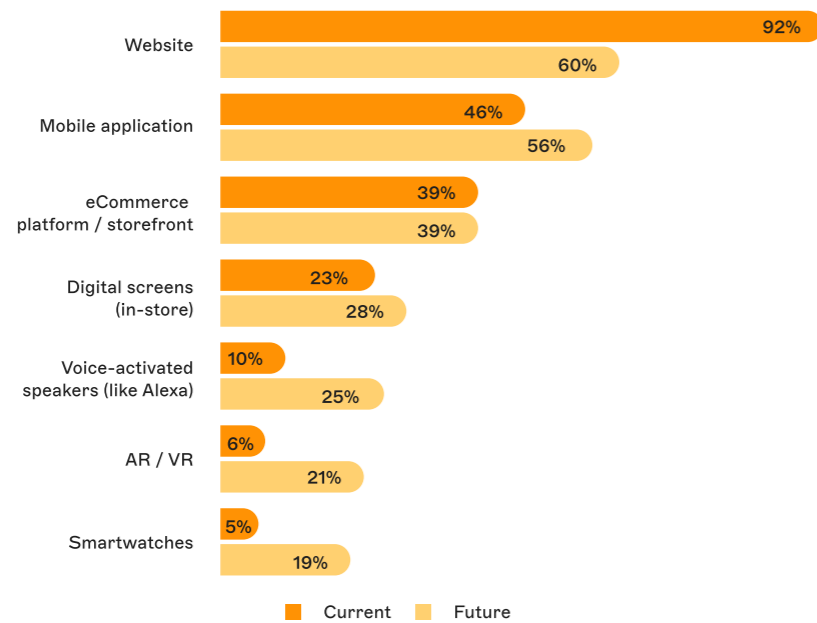
By now, we have a firmer idea of where we stand. CMS users are expecting more from their systems, both in functionality and in ease of use. Let's be blunt: that's not the most stable base to build big plans. And in addition to big expectations for CMSs, users have big ambitions for themselves.



Ready

We've discussed the finer points of omnichannel benefits: consistent user experience, efficient content management, lower cost, overall simplicity. You get the idea.

To see just how much the average user buys into these benefits, we took a look at the platforms they use now and the ones they plan on using in the future. The results, in a word: *more*.



The only platform to show a lesser future intent of usage was a website, which people predict they will be using 32% less in the future. Ecommerce storefronts are expected to remain steady. What's filling that gap? Pretty much everything else.

A 5% increase in digital screens and a 10% increase in mobile apps makes a certain kind of sense. Most people own a smartphone

these days, or have seen a digital display in store.

But it's not just the more familiar options that are getting popular. On the contrary, more cutting-edge content delivery channels had the highest rate of predicted increase. There's a 14% planned increase in smartwatch users, and a 15% planned increase each for AR/VR and voice-activated speakers.



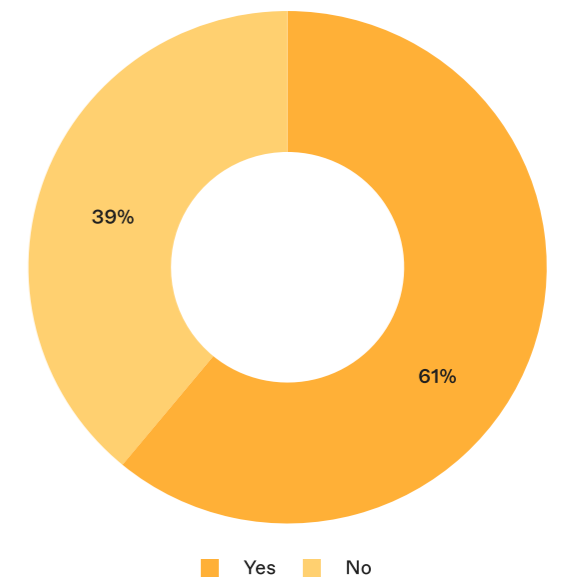
THE BIGGER PICTURE

This data shows that omnichannel is no longer the future of content management: it's the active, living present. Consumers demanding consistent content across multiple platforms is the new standard, which means brands are at the point of "now or never" when it comes to mastering the Internet of Things (IoT). Companies without the proper content strategy and technological power in place soon won't survive.

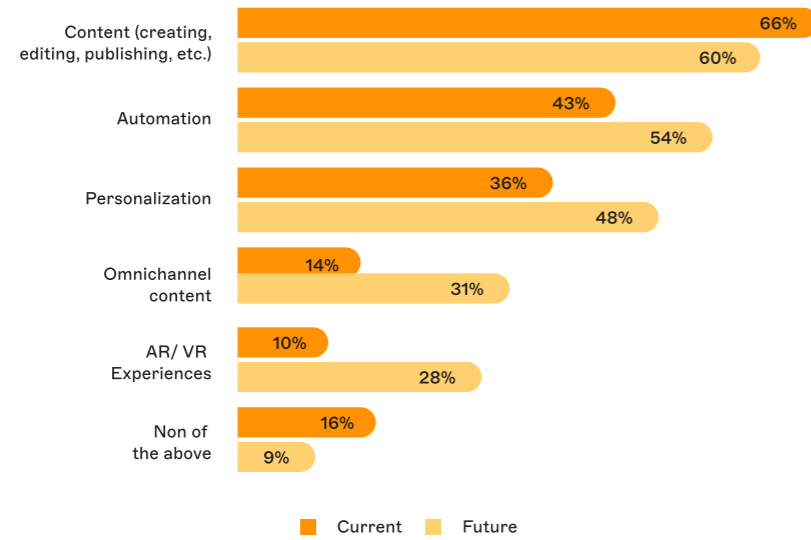
Set

Let's flash back to a little earlier in this report, where AI features were flagged as a most-missed feature in CMSs. Well, regardless of whether CMSs are ready to integrate the features or not, CMS users are.

The majority of them already have regulations governing AI use in their companies (61%). Having ground rules before you get started is always a good idea, but such a large percentage of people being ready, paired with the amount of people who wanted more AI features, points to something more. It's not a 'just in case' policy; this is a concrete, definitive plan for incorporating AI.



Future plans point to something even bigger:



Content creation, editing, and publishing are still the most popular use cases, but there's a slight decline in predicted future use. This could be the shine of the technology wearing off, or perhaps the potential copyright risks that come with reusing content generated from the works of others.

Instead, we see more behind-the-scenes uses of AI predicted for the future, such as automation, personalization, and omnichannel content. We also see the number of users who don't use AI for these main purposes decreasing in the future, indicating a growth in broad usage.

Interestingly, AR/VR predicted usage rates are almost triple the current usage. This not only shores up the argument that AI is here to stay, but it's also a strong vote of confidence for AR/VR itself. We may see more multi-technological dream teams on the horizon.

HEAR IT FROM THEM
 CMS users' ambitions aren't just about how much AI will be used. Respondents clued us in to other applications of AI they plan on wielding: lead creation, business intelligence, risk assessment, SEO optimization, and more. One user sums it up: AI can be used "possibly on anything".

CMS users are reporting a profound hunger for AI – and it's not just them. Nearly half of global consumers want more AI-driven experiences while shopping. Just like Google revolutionized the internet, Large Language Models (LLMs) are revolutionizing how users discover and interact with content. Increasingly, users are turning to conversational, AI-powered interfaces over traditional search engines, especially for complex or contextual queries.

Search engines are taking notice. Features like Google Gemini and Bing's AI-powered search are clear signs that crawlers are evolving to meet the demand. It's great news for users. But it presents a real challenge to content distributors. AI-generated responses are now dominating search results, especially in top-of-funnel and "how-to" queries, which means they're also capturing a larger share of traffic.

THE BIGGER PICTURE
 Thriving in this new landscape demands a radical degree of technological agility. Your content's relevance – and visibility – is now inextricably tied to how well it can integrate with AI ecosystems. To remain competitive, content must be more semantically rich, better structured, and deeply context-aware. Anything less risks invisibility. The bottom line? If you're not preparing your strategy and technology for an AI-rich world, you're already behind.

Go?

Today's CMS users have big plans. And for big plans, you need top-notch equipment. We have a unique situation in this survey in that a large percentage of users still rely on monolithic systems.

CAN CMS USERS ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS WHILE RELYING ON MONOLITHIC SYSTEMS?

Unfortunately, when the light turns green, many will find their engines sputtering rather than surging ahead. Legacy CMSs, weighed down by rigid, outdated infrastructure, simply aren't built for the speed, flexibility, and innovation today's digital landscape demands. Even users who cobble together workarounds face slower pipelines, fewer features, and endless friction. The harsh reality: they'll never match the potential — or the velocity — of competitors powered by future-ready, API-first architectures.

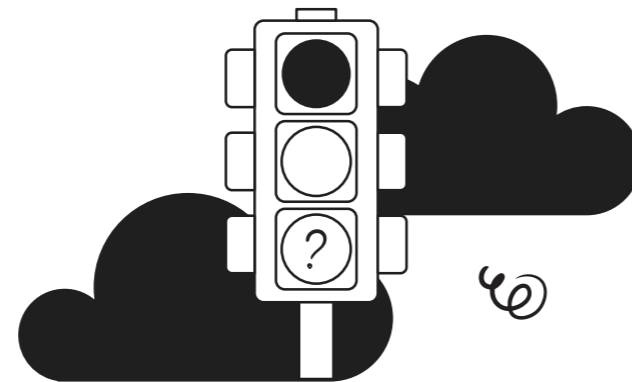
Legacy CMSs are relics of a simpler era. Their lack of future-proofing bleeds into every aspect of performance — with consequences far beyond just content production.

Take SEO, for example. Even before AI-driven search fundamentally rewrites the rules, search engines have already shifted to reward high-performing, fast-loading experiences. Monolithic CMSs, notorious for their

sluggish performance, are quietly forcing brands into higher costs: more spending on paid search, heavier investments in SEO, and continual patchwork fixes just to stay visible. It's a battle against the very foundation of the technology — and it's one they can't win long-term.

The demands of AI personalization, dynamic search, and omnichannel delivery aren't on the horizon anymore. They're here. And for those stuck on monolithic systems, the gap between ambition and reality is only getting wider.

That same problem is worse for security. A monolithic infrastructure is a one-hit K.O.: a single weakness anywhere in your system can lead to bad actors infiltrating every inch of your platform. Add on plugin and extension vulnerabilities, infrequent maintenance, and slow patch rollouts, and you have a ticking time bomb. Without the freedom to control your tech stack, you're powerless against both current and future threats.



That's not even to mention the missed distribution opportunities. Legacy CMSs bar you from true omnichannel success. Users are eager to cash in the benefits of a multi-channel approach, but many are still juggling multiple CMSs to do so. This kind of patchwork solution might keep you afloat during the short term, but it's not sustainable: you're stuck managing unscalable, costly ecosystems while competitors thrive on a single sleek platform.

And the cherry on top of it all? Legacy CMSs are just a pain to use. A huge list of plugins

with maintenance logistics, publication that takes days instead of minutes, nearly impossible tasks required to get the newest stuff to work with your system... It's non-stop problem-solving just to get your content out.

The hard truth is that yesterday's CMSs can't compete in today's market. They lack the speed, agility, and control required to keep up with demands, let alone exceed them. It's like playing pro-level baseball with a whiffle bat. Sure, maybe you'll make contact with the ball a few times, but you'll never score a home run.

SPEED	AGILITY	CONTROL
Slow publishing	Difficult to add new tech	Framework and template restrictions
Poor site performance	Rigid front and backend connection	High prices, limited choices
Limiting, convoluted workflows	Limited scalability	Restricted options for your tech stack

It gets worse. There's an urgent demand for content management performance, and companies still operating with rickety legacy systems are running out of time to adapt. Migrations don't happen overnight. And if your competitors have mastered modern tech while you're still forcing an old CMS to limp along, they'll have gained an aggressive advantage you might not be able to recover from.

EXPERT INSIGHT

“ 2025–2026 is the critical pivot window: Sites that aren't rethinking architecture now will be forced to play catch-up in just a couple of years... Legacy systems simply aren't future-proof, especially when it comes to personalisation and omnichannel strategies.

Mark Wheeler, Chief Marketing Officer

PART FOUR


The Future

Suggestion: Legacy systems were never built to address the challenges emerging now. As AI reshapes content discovery, and user expectations continue to rise, traditional CMS architectures will increasingly fall short — creating more friction, higher costs, and slower growth. Sustained success will require a shift to flexible, API-first platforms that can adapt to change, support continuous innovation, and remove

the operational barriers that limit teams today.

HEADLESS CMS.

Headless CMS works by removing the head (or the frontend) from the body (the backend). It may seem like a simple change, but by relying on APIs to communicate, headless is removing virtually all limits on how you manage and share content.



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

It's a flexibility win-win: devs get to work with whatever tech they want, while marketers can share their content across any type and number of devices.

This flexibility also meets the demands we've seen throughout this report. Those users who want to explore new channels? The disconnect of headless means that you're not locked into any frontend. Share content across any channel you want.

What about those struggling with poor site performance? The freedom of headless means you can have a lightweight system *and* integrate any performance tools seamlessly into your tech stack.

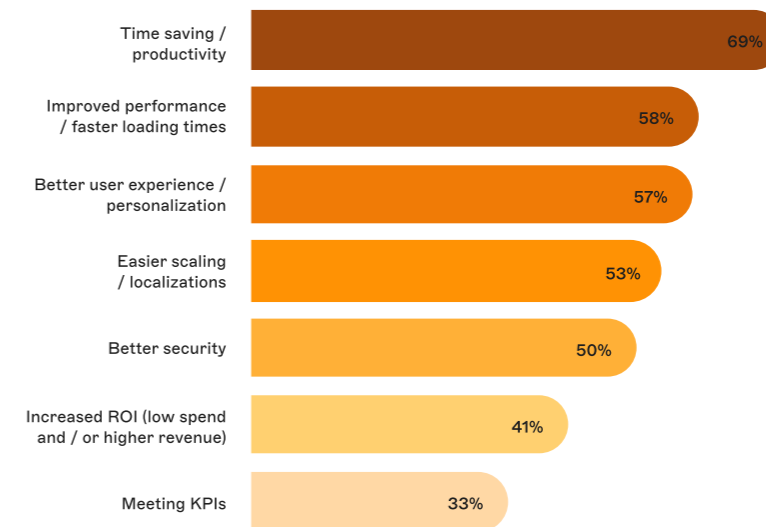
Speed? Agility? Control?

Check, check, check.


SPEED	AGILITY	CONTROL
Fast publishing	Future-proof API architecture	No framework limits
Optimized site performance	API-powered flexibility	No vendor lock-in
Streamlined workflows	Unlimited growth potential	Full control of your tech stack

Headless CMS

The benefits aren't simply theoretical. We have hard data from headless users in the sample — users who definitely feel the headless difference.



69% of users reported productivity improvements after switching to a headless CMS. Not only is time saved good for the bottom line, but users who can get their jobs done more efficiently are also the ones who are skipping long waits and annoying workflows for a better user experience on their end.



HEAR IT FROM THEM

Only 2% of people did not experience any benefits after switching. That's a 98% hit rate for headless!

In fact, the benefits of headless CMS across the board point to a better user experience for both your team and your customers. Faster loading times, more accurate personalization, easy expansion, and better

security benefit everyone who interacts with the CMS. And the increased ROI and meeting of KPIs doesn't hurt for the home team, either.

The benefits of headless are already showing in the job market. Our analysis of job postings in the USA tells a clear story, one that closely mirrors what we've seen so far.

For both marketers and devs, there's a glut of jobs seeking legacy CMS skills. That might make it seem like it's a more worthwhile bet. However, when it comes to salaries, it's clear which set the market is placing a premium on. Headless skills command higher pay on average for both teams:

AVERAGE US MARKETER PAY	
LEGACY	\$54,625
HEADLESS	\$101,270

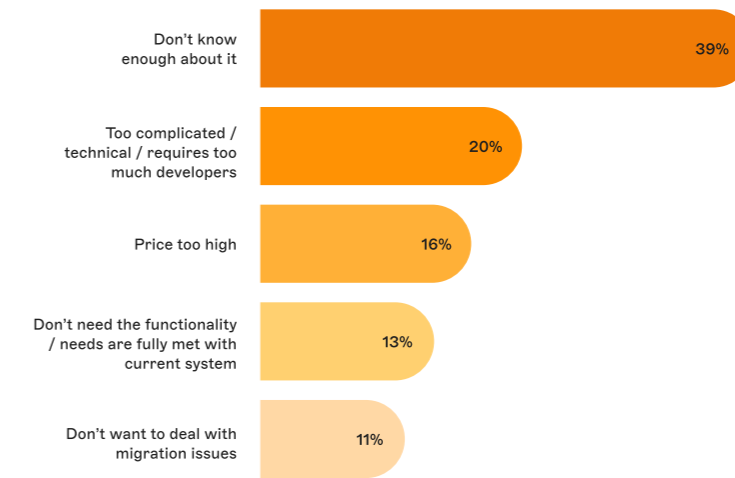
AVERAGE US DEVELOPER PAY	
LEGACY	\$75,575
HEADLESS	\$97,738

EXPERT INSIGHT

“ We're seeing it loud and clear in the job market: the industry is putting its money where its mouth is. Headless isn't just the future—it's now. The demand for headless CMS experience is showing up in higher-paying roles across the board, while legacy and WordPress positions lag behind in compensation. That's not a coincidence. It's a signal that companies are valuing modern architecture with real budget. This isn't just theory anymore—there's a premium on innovation, and headless is leading the charge.

Marisa Pereira, VP of People

But despite the obvious benefits to CMS users, consumers, and job seekers alike, we still had a largely monolithic sample. So we asked CMS users why they hadn't decided to make the upgrade yet.



The leading option by far was simply not knowing enough about it. It's a big investment, so it makes perfect sense that users would want to do their due diligence before embracing it. It's also a resounding vote of confidence for headless that the biggest reason for resisting modernization was still learning about it.



THE BIGGER PICTURE

The biggest roadblock between legacy users and headless is education. This presents a valuable window opportunity for those who make the switch – but it has to be soon. Being one of the first to adopt a headless CMS gives you the power to fully embrace everything the future of content management has to offer. If you can master headless while competitors are still forcing yesterday's CMS to meet today's needs, count on a razor sharp competitive edge.

It might seem like a minor technical difference to some, but the writing is on the wall. Employers, legacy users, and headless users alike are waking up to the fact that headless is the only future-proof way to manage your content. Soon, it'll become the make-or-break difference across every industry. It's up to you which side you want to land on.

Conclusion

Today's CMS users are neither passive nor naive. They know what their customers are demanding, and they know what they need from their systems to meet those demands. What we've seen in this report is as consumer expectations have skyrocketed, CMS users are merely challenging their systems to keep up with the pace, **and legacy options are coming up short.**

But it's not just anxiety about current complaints. It's about the future, too. CMS users have big ambitions to wow customers in 2025 and beyond. They're staring down the barrel of some of their biggest challenges yet, and they're doing it with tools that can't even meet their benchmarks: tech that's hard to use, underperforms, and limits every team.

Accelerated technology can be a blessing and a curse. AI searches will open countless opportunities, but only for teams who are technologically agile enough to accommodate them. Omnichannel unlocks a world of new ways to connect with your customers, but only if your content is consistent and streamlined enough to wow them.

But here's the key: in a world of tightening budgets and rising expectations, your CMS can either be a cost sink or a source of operational efficiency. Headless CMS platforms, with their performance-driven architectures

and flexibility, enable digital teams to reduce unnecessary expenditures on inefficient legacy systems. The savings freed up can be reinvested in more strategic areas, like investing in AI-driven customer innovation or expanding ecommerce capabilities. For marketing leaders, this means being able to make bold moves without being hampered by outdated technology.

The benefits a headless CMS provides are no longer perks. As technological standards accelerate and consumers expect more and more from companies, the trademarks of a headless system have become crucial to long-term success.

As we stand on the brink of a content management renaissance, there's just one question left to answer:

Will *your* CMS be up to the challenges tomorrow brings?

About Storyblok

Storyblok is the headless CMS for marketers and developers who want to make bigger, faster market impact.

Developers thrive with the freedom to build better, faster, more flexible content experiences using their chosen tech stack. Marketers move with agility and independence, effortlessly editing, personalizing, and publishing content across every channel.

And customers? The seamless content experiences keep them engaged, delighted, and coming back for more.

Get Joyful. 

**See how Storyblok can revolutionize
your content at storyblok.com.**

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