



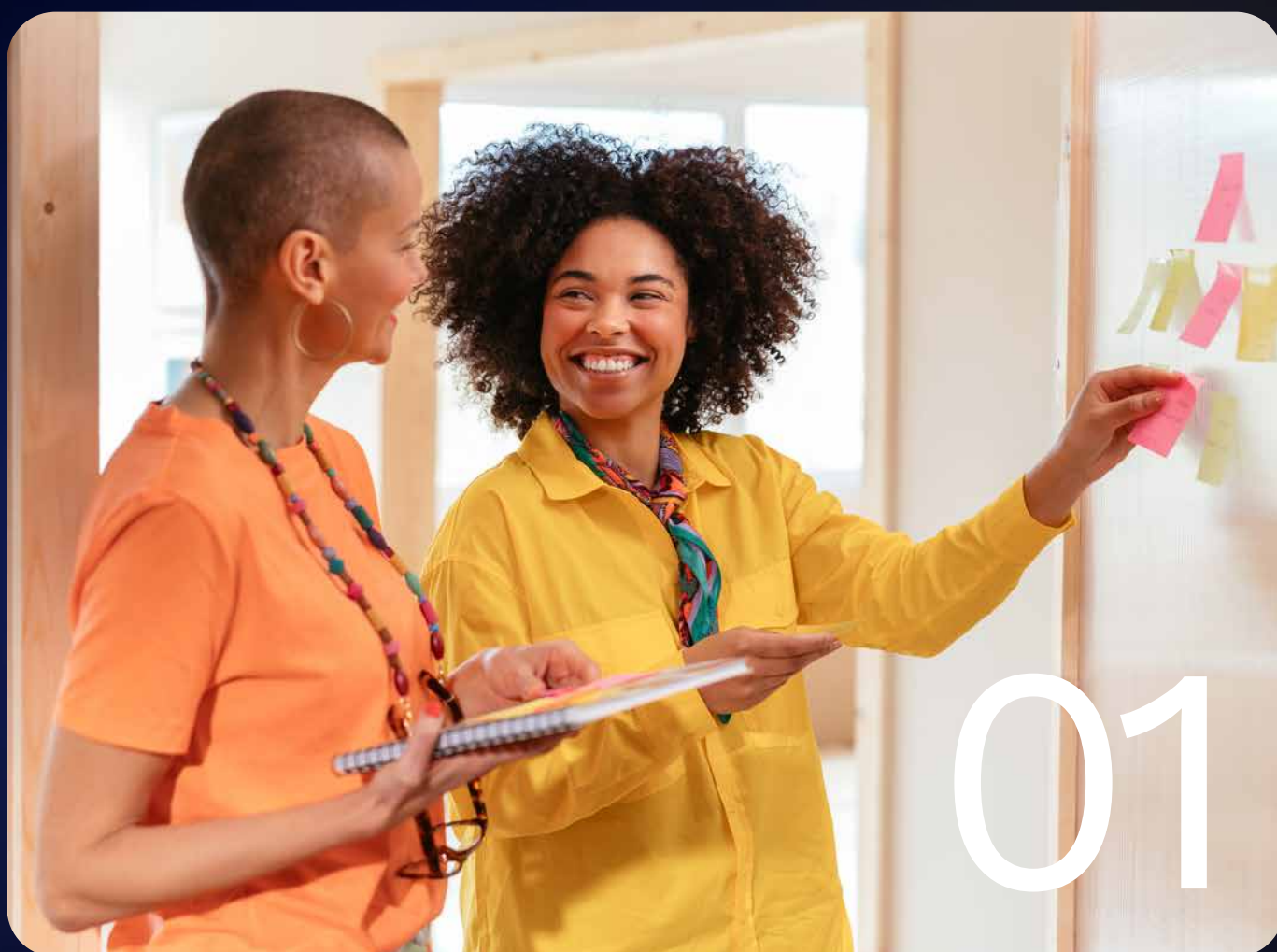
MERKLE

Orchestrating the Content Ecosystem

a dentsu company

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The State of Content Operations and Why Change Matters



Why Your Content Technology Isn't Delivering ROI

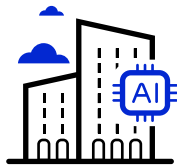
The future of work is changing faster than most organizations can adapt. Companies have spent billions on tech stacks and AI for content supply chain operations. The promise: faster speed to market, lower costs, and better customer engagement.

The reality: [95% of businesses](#) have not seen ROI from their internal AI projects. Content operations are no exception. Despite massive platform investments, most organizations still struggle with manual workflows, scattered assets, and disjointed teams.

Where's the disconnect? **Most companies skip the organizational changes needed to make new content platforms work.**

Organizations that close this gap gain competitive advantage. Those that don't risk losing ground to competitors who figured out how to unlock value from these investments.

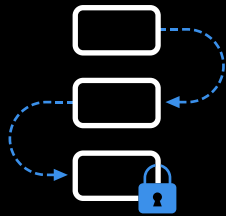
95 %



of businesses have not seen ROI from their internal AI projects.



Where Things Break Down



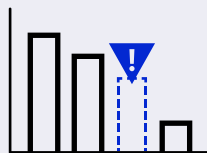
Rigid workflows.

[Only 23% of leading organizations](#) are highly adaptable in integrating new technology. **Siloed content processes built over decades don't work with modern platforms.**



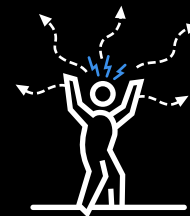
Scattered assets.

Content lives across disconnected tools and teams, leaving no foundation for governance or automation.



Missing metrics.

Without clear connections between platform usage and business outcomes, **ROI remains invisible.**



Competing priorities.

[64% of executives](#) cite competing transformation initiatives as the top change management barrier. **Overloaded roadmaps stall progress.**

Technology Alone Doesn't Deliver Results

Brands must build a modern content ecosystem where processes, stakeholders, and technology work together.

Successful organizations address the change management that makes adoption stick. They plan for quick wins and are intentional about their roadmap, their technology investments, and the experts they bring in.

This playbook shares strategies to make that happen. The insights come from hundreds of hands-on engagements helping our clients realize value, building content ecosystems across various industries, and transforming our own operations.

What's a content ecosystem?

A content ecosystem encompasses the **people, processes, platforms, and systems** that contribute to—and are impacted by—all forms of enterprise content, from ideation and approval to generation, activation, and measurement.



A High-Performance Content Ecosystem Creates Real Business Value

An optimized content ecosystem delivers clear business value: lower costs, higher revenue, and better marketing and commerce performance. But optimizing your content processes delivers beyond the bottom line.

Employee retention. Teams need to see how new technology, especially AI, will evolve their jobs, not replace them. Without clarity, they revert to familiar manual processes, and the technology sits unused. With clarity, content technology reduces friction, improves retention, and boosts productivity.

Customer satisfaction. [Sixty-nine percent of consumers](#) expect brands they regularly shop to anticipate what products they need. Content plays a critical role in personalization across the entire experience, from discovery and media engagement to post-purchase support and loyalty.

Brand reputation. Dysfunctional content systems lead to inconsistent experiences. The messaging, merchandising, and storytelling simply don't resonate with customers.

Given the stakes, it's essential to realize maximum value from your content technology investment.

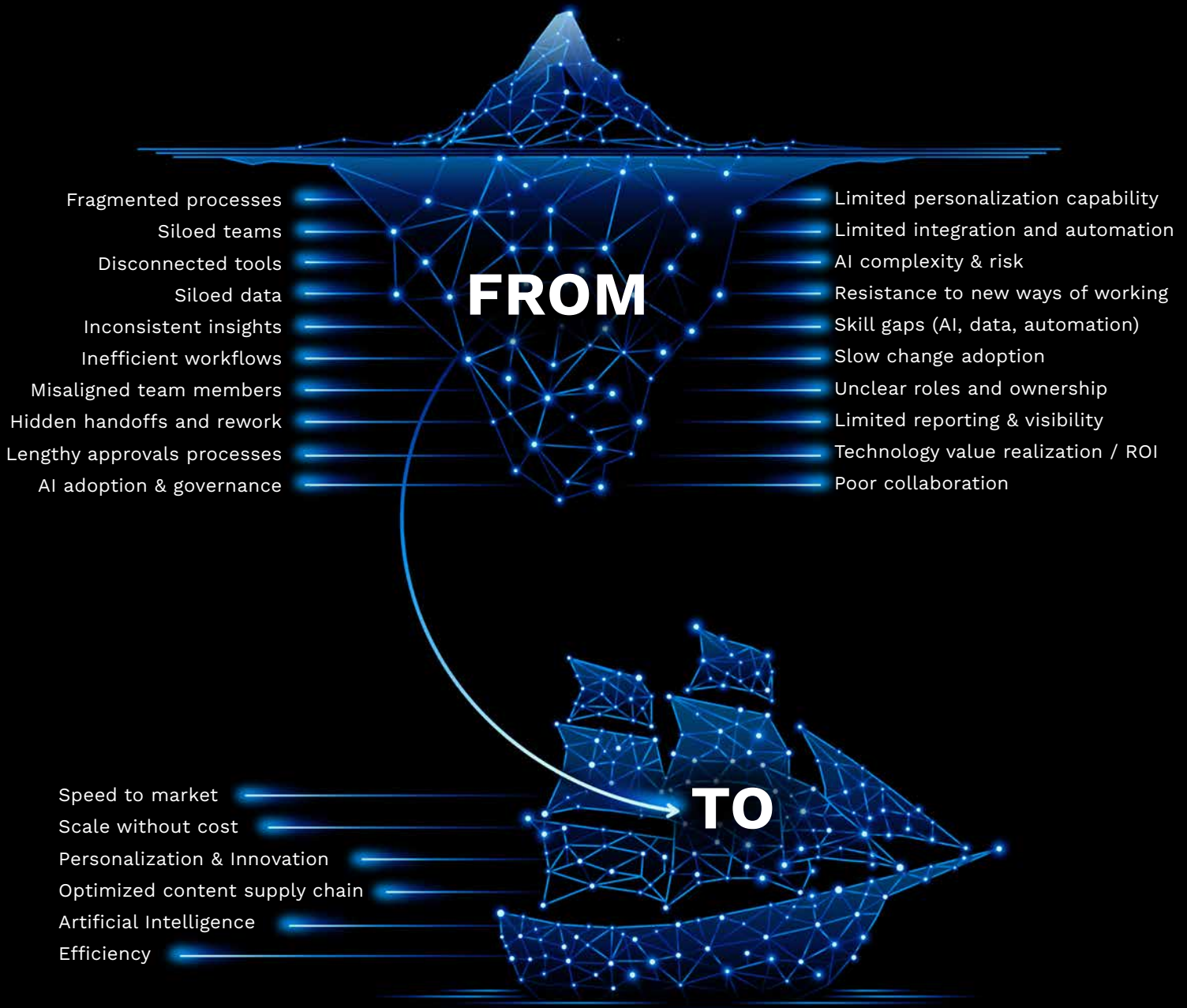


69%



of consumers expect brands they regularly shop to anticipate what products they need.

The Hidden Barriers to Content Success



How Your Content Ecosystem Creates Alignment





Your Content Ecosystem Should Keep Your Organization Aligned

A well-orchestrated content ecosystem requires the right tools and platforms, but extends beyond them to address the hidden barriers to success—the bottom of the iceberg. **It aligns people to the right work and creates efficiency through collaboration** across every stakeholder group to address resistance to change, skill gaps, and more.

Here's what that looks like in practice: A marketing manager drops their campaign asset request into the AI-brief developer, and a complete brief auto-populates the right tags and categories based on existing content ecosystem data.

Creative is developed in pre-approved templates. An AI reviewer provides brand and legal compliance scores. The marketing manager, brand team, and legal team review and approve the final version in real time.

Campaign assets deploy to channels in hours instead of weeks, automatically optimized for various formats and geographies.

This enables commerce teams to finally deliver personalization at scale. Dynamic landing pages optimize automatically based on real-time customer data, such as emotional context and intent. Dynamic merchandising content—descriptions, specs, imagery—stays in sync across every channel and format. Personalized offers actually resonate. The ecosystem eliminates the manual work that previously made this level of customization impossible.

Consider how your content ecosystem can empower different groups:



Marketing teams want automated briefing, connected workflows tied to channel activation, and full-funnel performance measurement.



Creative teams want updated briefing data, cross-team collaboration, efficient approvals, and streamlined production.



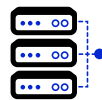
Product and ops teams want content aligned to product launches, coordinated messaging across touchpoints, and visibility into what's in production.



Commerce teams want optimized product content and personalized merchandising to create more engaging experiences that lift sales and conversion rates.



Customer service teams want accurate, up-to-date content for support interactions and seamless handoffs between pre-purchase and post-purchase experiences.



IT teams want connected and advanced platforms, consolidated architecture, and governed, compliant systems.



Legal and compliance teams want governance built into workflows, audit trails for regulatory requirements, and risk mitigation before content goes live.



Procurement teams want cost controls, resource management support, and transparent reporting.



Technology fails when some or all of these needs are not met. **An effective content ecosystem should consider these needs and align processes and platforms to meet them.**

The Now/Near/Next Approach for Sustained Success



Start with a Now/Near/Next Blueprint



Most organizations upgrade their content ecosystem by buying technology first. They select platforms, configure in silos, and then spend months planning while their teams wait for tangible value. This order of operations leads to generic use cases, governance gaps that surface after go-live, and expensive technology that replicates existing dysfunction.

The better approach: redesign how work gets done, then select technology that enables your improved processes. Incremental progress that delivers value realization at every stage sustains organizational buy-in and builds momentum for broader transformation. While the long-term goal is a complete content ecosystem transformation, the short-term goals and quick wins are what get you there.

The Now/Near/Next framework gives you a staged transformation path: start by mapping your current state to identify opportunities, design your optimized near-future process, then prepare for advanced agentic capabilities once the foundation is in place.

What is a content use case? A content use case is a specific scenario where content needs to be created, delivered, or optimized to support a customer interaction or journey stage.

Your complete blueprint should include:

- 01** Specific content **use cases** linked to business outcomes, along with the technology, related processes, and stakeholders that support them.
- 02** Future-state **operating model** and process maps with defined roles, responsibilities, and workflows.
- 03** Future-state **technology architecture** showing system connections, data flow, and stakeholder requirements for integrations, taxonomy, workflows, access, and tasks across systems.
- 04** **Organizational readiness** requirements, including new capabilities and governance structures.

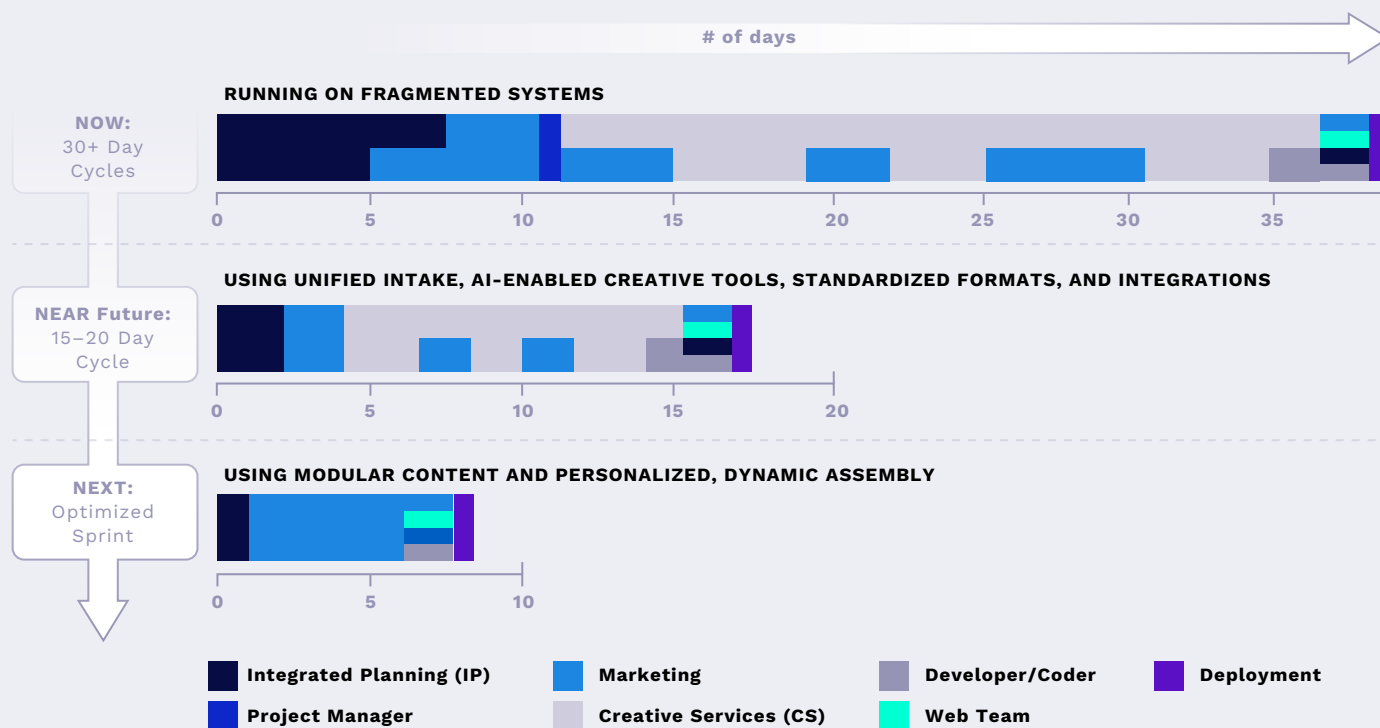


Your Current Content Processes (and How to Improve Them)

Start your blueprint with a current content activation timeline to identify potential opportunities. Map the details: How long does each step take? How many people are involved? How many handoffs? What tools and tech are in place, and how do they connect? This level of specificity is critical for prioritizing issues based on impact.

With a detailed map in hand, you may find quick wins that require no technology investment at all. This could include eliminating one redundant approval step, connecting two systems that require manual data transfer, or establishing basic governance to reduce approval cycles. **These process improvements often deliver immediate value while building organizational confidence for larger changes ahead.**

How an optimized content ecosystem accelerates campaign timelines



While details are valuable for planning, not everyone will care about every platform and person involved in content processes. A visual mapping like the one above helps stakeholders more easily see the current state, targeted areas for improvement, and anticipated benefits.



Design Your “50% Faster” Content Process

Once you can see your current ecosystem and where the opportunities lie, you’re ready to redesign how content flows through your organization. Process consolidation, governance frameworks, and operational changes come first. Then you select or reconfigure technology to enable those improved workflows.

Solutions at this stage might include:

- **Consolidating fragmented processes** into an enterprise work management program with clear ownership and accountability
- **Embedding process governance frameworks** that reduce approval cycles
- **Developing AI-ready brand guidelines** and channel activation templates
- **Codifying enterprise metadata and taxonomy** to make content discoverable and reusable

These aren’t technology projects; they’re operational transformations that technology supports. By starting with your business’s unique needs and processes, platforms become enablers, not solutions you hope will solve undefined problems.

These optimizations deliver measurable efficiency gains and create the foundation for advanced capabilities.





Enable Agentic Capabilities

As part of your blueprint planning, identify areas that could benefit from more complex agentic and generative AI-powered solutions. You're not implementing these immediately but mapping them as longer-term priorities so your near-term decisions don't create barriers to future capabilities.

Potential use cases at this stage include:

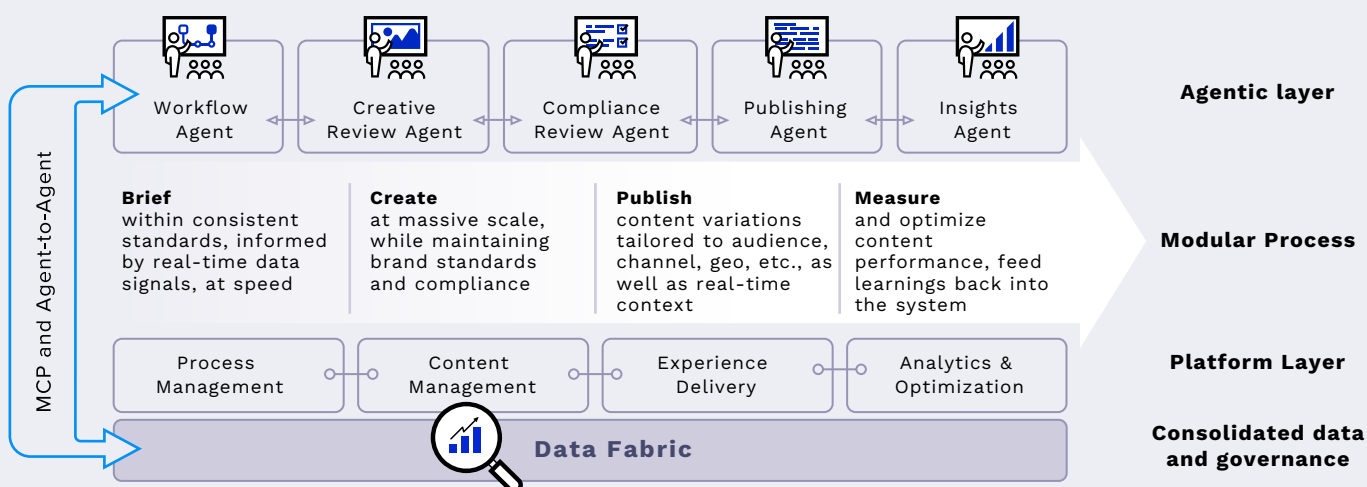
- Accelerate and standardize the **briefing process**
- Massively **scale content** based on a variety of data signals and real-time performance data
- Generate **content variations** across audiences, channels (both marketing and commerce), formats, and geographies
- Analyze content performance and optimize content based on **predictive intelligence**

This represents the most advanced transformation stage and may require new organizational capabilities, evolved roles and responsibilities, and additional technology platforms when you're ready to implement. **Understanding these requirements early ensures your near-term platform selections, process designs, and team structures support future agentic capabilities.**

Enterprise content supply chain ecosystems at this level involve complex integrations across multiple platforms, workflows, and stakeholder groups. Technology decisions benefit from seeing working demonstrations rather than theoretical frameworks.

It's also helpful to learn from others. Most enterprise organizations face similar content challenges; best practices from firsthand experience can help you avoid common pitfalls and smooth your transformation journey.

An Agent-Enabled Content Supply Chain



Read our [agentic AI playbook](#) to explore how agentic AI can improve your content ecosystem.

Content Partnerships and Success Stories





An Adaptive, End-to-End Content Supply Chain Solution

With content ecosystem optimization, we've been where you are. That's why we implemented [Adobe GenStudio dentsu+](#)—to transform our own content ecosystem. We use this system every day to deliver content at scale, which means we understand both the technology architecture and the production realities our clients face.

This is not theoretical expertise. When we blueprint a client's content ecosystem, we draw from **hands-on experience** designing, building, and operating one of the most advanced implementations in the market.



Successful Content Ecosystems in Action: Two Case Studies

Adobe GenStudio dentsu+ Transformation – Revamping dentsu’s Content Ecosystem

Disconnected tools, manual processes, and fragmented systems created bottlenecks across dentsu's global teams, slowing content delivery from planning through production and distribution.

Adobe and dentsu partnered to build an integrated content supply chain solution, using it to deliver Adobe’s marketing campaigns and transform dentsu’s internal operations.

We designed and implemented an end-to-end content delivery ecosystem that connects client and agency operations, unified asset management, and automated workflows across multiple platforms and teams. This included integrating Adobe Workfront-to-Adobe Workfront for client–agency handoffs, AEM-to-AEM for centralized assets, and integrated workflows spanning DI Studio, Dropbox, and Adobe Creative Cloud. Beyond core platform integrations, we evolved roles and aligned people, processes, governance, and operating models to seamlessly collaborate at scale.



The program delivered twelve AI-powered automation pipelines, standardized ways of working, and end-to-end performance measurement—driving faster campaign execution, improving transparency, and strengthening both client delivery and dentsu’s internal content operations. By integrating Adobe’s content supply chain with dentsu’s proprietary technology, we achieved:



125 x quicker decision-making and data-driven AI insight generation

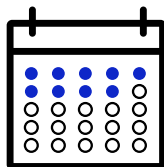


50 % faster asset production time-to-market—with more gains expected in year 2



Accelerating Engagement and Growth with a Strong Content Supply Chain

Lumen Technologies was evolving from a traditional network service provider to a modern B2B technology solutions partner. Their disconnected marketing and CX technology stack, manual workflows, and siloed data architecture prevented them from delivering personalized customer experiences at scale. Merkle developed a comprehensive digital transformation strategy spanning data modernization, content supply chain optimization, and technology architecture alignment.



64% reduction in content creation time (from 25 days to 9 days)



3x faster time to market for social campaigns

Read the full case study here.

LEARN MORE



How to Get Started



Your Next Steps

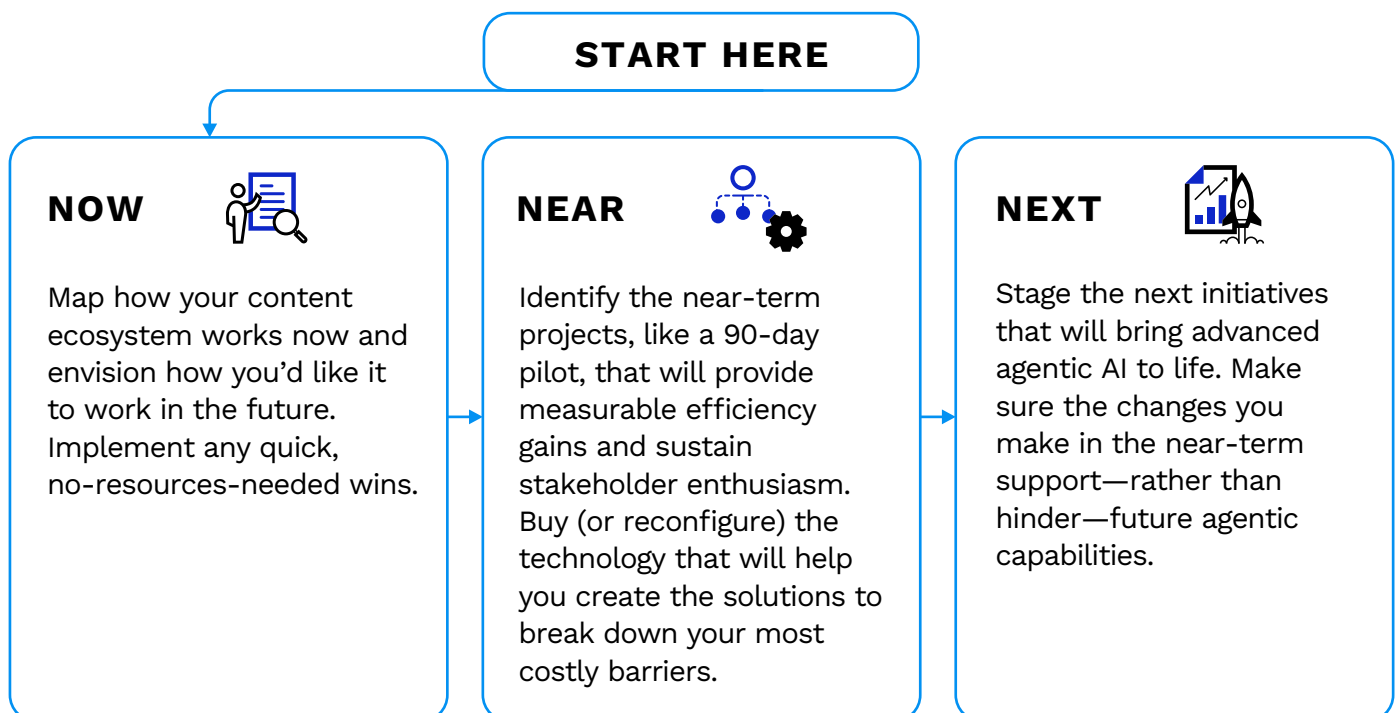
Technology investments fail when organizations overlook the change required to enable them. Effective content ecosystems address this by systematically aligning content technology, operational workflows, and cross-functional teams to turn platform investments into measurable value.

What does success look like? Teams stop recreating assets that already exist. Campaigns launch in days instead of months.

Product information updates flow instantly across all channels. Production scales without increasing headcount. Creative teams spend less time on approvals and more time creating. Compliance is no longer a bottleneck, it's part of the process. Executives see clear metrics connecting platform usage to business outcomes.

This is value realization.

You don't need to change everything at once. Create your blueprint so you can prove value quickly. Maybe that's one integration that eliminates a bottleneck. Or one governance win that makes content findable across teams. Or one workflow redesign that cuts production time in half. Each proof point builds the case for broader transformation.



Turn Technology Spend into Business Impact

AI and agentic capabilities are making scalable, efficient, impactful content creation possible. Most organizations have already bought the technology. What's missing is the expertise to drive adoption at scale and the blueprint work that ensures the platform fits the organization.

The market is accelerating. Organizations that master their content ecosystem now will define the competitive standard for the next decade. Your platform investments are capable of more than they're currently delivering, and making changes is no longer optional.

Starting this quarter instead of putting it off means more value, sooner.

Not sure where you stand? Our Content Content Ecosystem Diagnostic benchmarks your current state in a 45-60 minute consultative session. You'll walk away with a clear picture of your maturity level and prioritized opportunities for improvement. Reach out to our team to schedule your evaluation.



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About Merkle

Merkle, a dentsu company, powers the experience economy. For more than 35 years, the company has put people at the heart of its approach to digital business transformation. As the only integrated experience consultancy in the world with a heritage in data science and business performance, Merkle delivers holistic, end-to-end experiences that drive growth, engagement, and loyalty. Merkle’s expertise has earned recognition as a “Leader” by top industry analyst firms, in categories such as digital transformation and commerce, experience design, engineering and technology integration, digital marketing, data science, CRM and loyalty, and customer data management. With more than 16,000 employees, Merkle operates in 30+ countries throughout the Americas, EMEA, and APAC. For more information, visit www.merkle.com.

All predictions and assertions made in this guide are Merkle’s opinion and should not be taken as advice or guarantees.

Merkle complies with all local privacy laws in processing data, with or without AI.

Examples of adaptive experiences and real-time personalization are contingent on lawful basis and contractual permissions and must comply with consent, transparency, and opt-out requirements.

All AI initiatives should be handled responsibly, with appropriate testing, governance, and human involvement.

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