

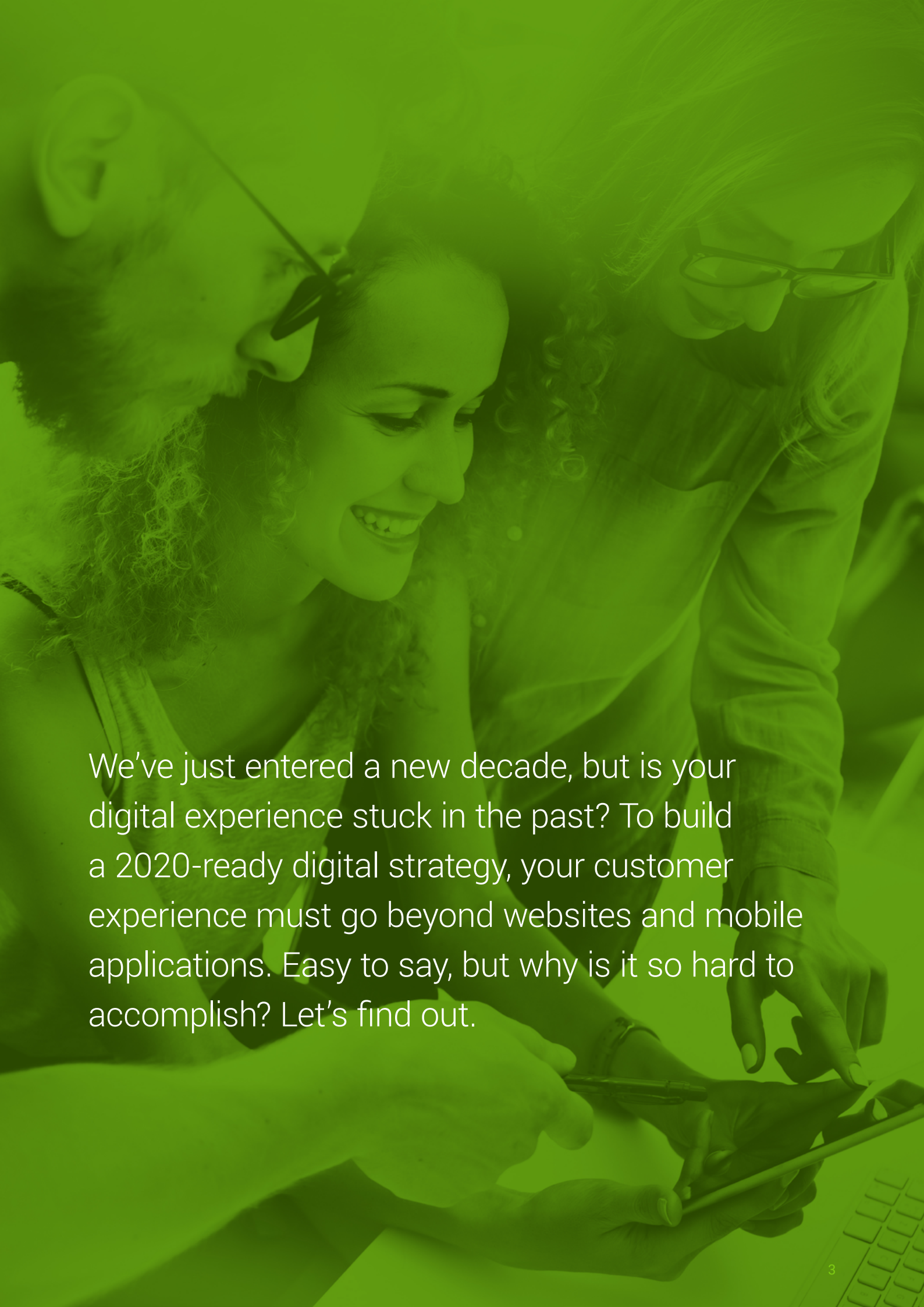
# Digital Experience in 2020:

Why Websites and Apps  
Aren't Enough



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We've just entered a new decade, but is your digital experience stuck in the past? To build a 2020-ready digital strategy, your customer experience must go beyond websites and mobile applications. Easy to say, but why is it so hard to accomplish? Let's find out.

There has been a steady shift over the last few years towards a vastly different web experience driven by headless, IoT devices, smart speakers, and more. Consumers aren't just searching for information and interacting with brands from their desktops or laptops anymore. This new way of digital consumption requires brands to utilize an entirely different set of technologies to provide digital experiences to consumers.

“What exactly do modern consumers want?  
And how can decision-makers make the right  
technological and organizational choices to meet  
and exceed those expectations?”

Brands, however, are finding themselves in limbo between their legacy backend systems and the software they need to meet fluctuating customer demands. That's because consumer behavior is gravitating towards fewer platforms that are most convenient for the individual, and the most popular digital mediums are changing rapidly. Many organizations don't have the technologies and processes in place to adapt quickly enough.

In this new era of the web — where websites and apps aren't enough for consumers — brands are left wondering how they can compete. What exactly do modern consumers want? And how can decision-makers make the right technological and organizational choices to meet and exceed those expectations?

In this whitepaper, we'll cover the shift away from the traditional web and what the new digital experiences consumers want look like. We'll also look at the technologies brands need — which empower marketers and developers alike — to provide these web experiences.

# The Traditional Approach to Digital Experience is a Broken Model

In 2020, it may no longer make sense to focus on brand websites and mobile apps. That's because users are downloading fewer apps each year, and internet usage is consolidating within just a few large social platforms. In fact, [97% of mobile usage is centered around only ten apps, and more than half of Americans don't download any apps at all on a monthly basis](#). Here are a number of reasons for this shift away from traditional web experiences.

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## Decline of desktop usage

The internet activities that users typically did on desktops have been replaced by or supplemented with smartphones. That's because each year, as mobile devices and tablets continue to get more powerful, there are fewer reasons to use a laptop or desktop. Furthermore, mobile usage is often more accessible than desktops in developing countries and emerging markets as well. In the long run, this means brands will have the ability to meet consumers wherever they are, and engage with them whenever they want.

## Demand for convenience

Today's consumers want control over their digital experiences — especially when it comes to eCommerce. The ability to start the shopping experience on one touchpoint and seamlessly move to another to continue the customer journey is becoming a necessity for brands to deliver. That means traditional eCommerce stores — and the platforms that power them — are losing their market share in favor of flexible eCommerce solutions that can provide the level of convenience shoppers demand.

## Adoption of new mediums

The channels that consumers use are changing rapidly — especially the most popular social media platforms. The younger generation, for example, has mostly moved away from Facebook in favor of Snapchat and TikTok. That's not to mention the overwhelming number of emerging channels like voice and AR/VR that are seeing adoption across industries. Brands need to improve their digital agility if they want to have a brand presence where consumers actually are.

## Decreased sticky behavior

Since web usage has mostly moved to YouTube, Instagram, and other large social platforms with an endless stream of new content, there's been a substantial decrease in "sticky" behavior. In fact, [smartphone users spend 50% of their time in one app alone](#). Many consumers may briefly visit their favorite brand's site, but it's becoming harder to consistently peel them away from other platforms and get them to keep coming back.

2020 may see a shift in company websites acting more as a landing page or lead magnet rather than a full-fledged user experience that few site users interact with.

## Hyper-personalization is now a staple, not a luxury

Besides a constant dose of new content, a key aspect of keeping users coming back is personalization. Today's consumers demand highly personal interactions with their favorite brands. That's why [78% of internet users said that personally relevant content from brands increases their purchase activity](#). One of the foremost companies leading the charge for personalization is Amazon, with product recommendations and content fueled by consumer data and past customer behavior. If brands want to compete, they need to form a hyper-personalization strategy to deliver relevant content to their customers.

With these factors in mind, it's clear that the traditional web approach won't be enough in the near future. Brands will need to adjust their strategy in order to compete. So, what's the solution?

# Truly Valuable Content Always Wins

Brands need to have a strategy in place that offers real value where internet users are actually spending their time, and convey this value quickly and efficiently while they have the attention of potential leads.

Value starts with a product or service that's useful to a brand's intended audience but extends to the content companies produce as well. Content marketing needs to focus on relevant information that educates and entertains consumers. With valuable content, not just promotional content, brands can stand out from competitors and capture the attention, respect, and appreciation of potential customers.

But today's digital marketing efforts are equally dependent on both what brands publish and where they publish it. That means marketers need to be presenting value on the right platforms — and it's probably not just the company's website.

Companies need to provide value on the large social platforms and other emerging channels first and foremost. Only after capturing the attention of potential leads (through your consistent offerings of valuable content) is it worth focusing on bringing them back to the brand website or native app. This is a fundamental shift from the traditional approach that focused on the company website as central to a brand's web presence. For these reasons, the websites and apps that brands do build need to provide value quickly.

With a limited amount of attention from site visitors and a lower chance of them ever returning, these web experiences need to present a clear CTA from the start — whether it's a direct sale or email capture form for future marketing campaigns.

## Good Content Educates, Entertains, and Evokes Emotion

According to the legendary advertising executive David Abbott, “sh\*t that arrives at the speed of light is still sh\*t”.

While your channels—and their individual user experiences—are important, it’s paramount that you prioritize the value of your message first and foremost.

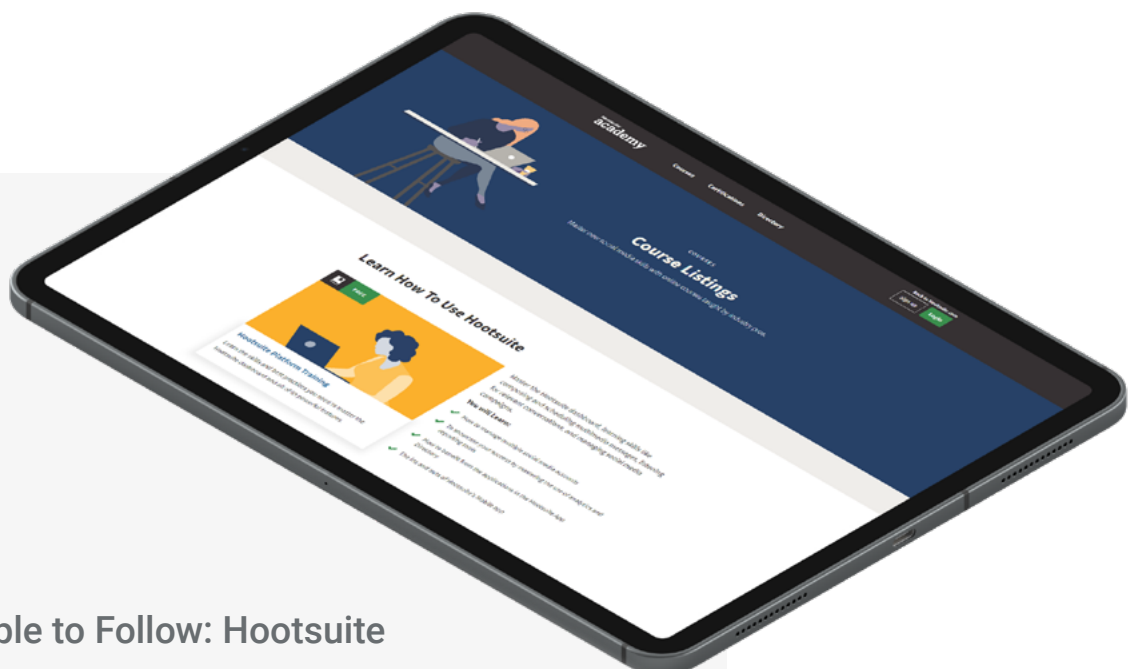
When it comes down to the nitty-gritty of producing content that brings value, brands often struggle. Is it enough to share the latest news from your industry? Will a blog post about your product’s latest feature suffice? Absolutely not. Here’s what to focus on instead.



## 1. Educational Content

Educational content helps your audience better understand your industry and your products or services. This content should answer relevant questions that align with your audience's interests, wants, and needs. This includes educating them about how your brand can benefit them, but brand-focused content shouldn't be the only educational content you produce.

When producing educational content, it can be helpful to think of "how to" or "how did" information, depending on what you sell. "How to" content works best for software or other types of products that customers will continually learn how to use well after they buy the product. "How did" content is best for products or services that are meant to produce a particular outcome for the customer.



### An Example to Follow: Hootsuite

Hootsuite is the most widely used social media platform for managing numerous social channels from one centralized location. And to help its users get the most of its product the company also has a training and certification program called Hootsuite Platform Training within the Hootsuite Academy.

[Hootsuite takes its educational content a step further](#), however, by offering courses on social marketing, social advertising, and more within the Hootsuite Academy as well. These courses enable the company to build brand awareness and authority within the social media industry, while also helping its customers get better results from their product. In addition, the certifications Hootsuite offers for successfully completing its courses fosters its reputation as an industry leader. Hootsuite successfully uses educational content to drive its brand awareness strategy.

## 2. Entertaining Content

Entertaining content is an opportunity to show the personality and character of your brand. This type of content could be funny, but it doesn't have to be. An inspiring video or behind the scenes Instagram stories at the company's head office add a more human element to your brand's reputation. Entertaining content is a great way to capture the attention of your intended audience.

Creating entertaining content can be the most challenging of the three types. You need to be in tune with your audience and pop culture at the same time. Some publishing mediums are also more entertaining than others, such as memes, videos, and other audiovisual types of content.

### An Example to Follow: IKEA

IKEA — the world famous ready-to-assemble furniture chain — took an innovative and entertaining approach to promote its catalogue. Its video ad and campaign “Experience The Power of a Bookbook” is a spoof on an Apple-like product promotion. The IKEA campaign uses the dichotomy between print books and the digital devices replacing them to create a satirical ad that garnered hype for the brand and its catalogue.

Using entertaining content, [IKEA's Bookbook campaign](#) reached far beyond its initial audience in Singapore and Malaysia by appealing to its global audience as well. IKEA successfully used entertainment to build brand awareness and interest in its catalogues.



### 3. Emotional Content

Emotional or positive content helps brands connect with their audience on a deeper level. This type of content should make consumers feel better about themselves for having interacted with your brand or even purchased a product or service from you. Uplifting stories about customers, motivational content, or supporting uncontroversial causes can create a more positive image for your brand that customers want to be a part of.

Producing emotional content requires a deep understanding of your ideal customer and what triggers an emotional response from them. Apple didn't sell its products because of its hardware, but many creatives bought their laptops, for example, because they felt it would make them a better graphic designer or music producer.



#### An Example to Follow: LEGO

LEGO produces toy sets for younger and older children alike. Through its advertising, however, the company appeals to the emotions of parents. In the ad above, for example, LEGO describes the proud feeling of accomplishment a child experiences when they build something using LEGOs, whether it's simple building blocks for younger children or more realistic pieces for older children.

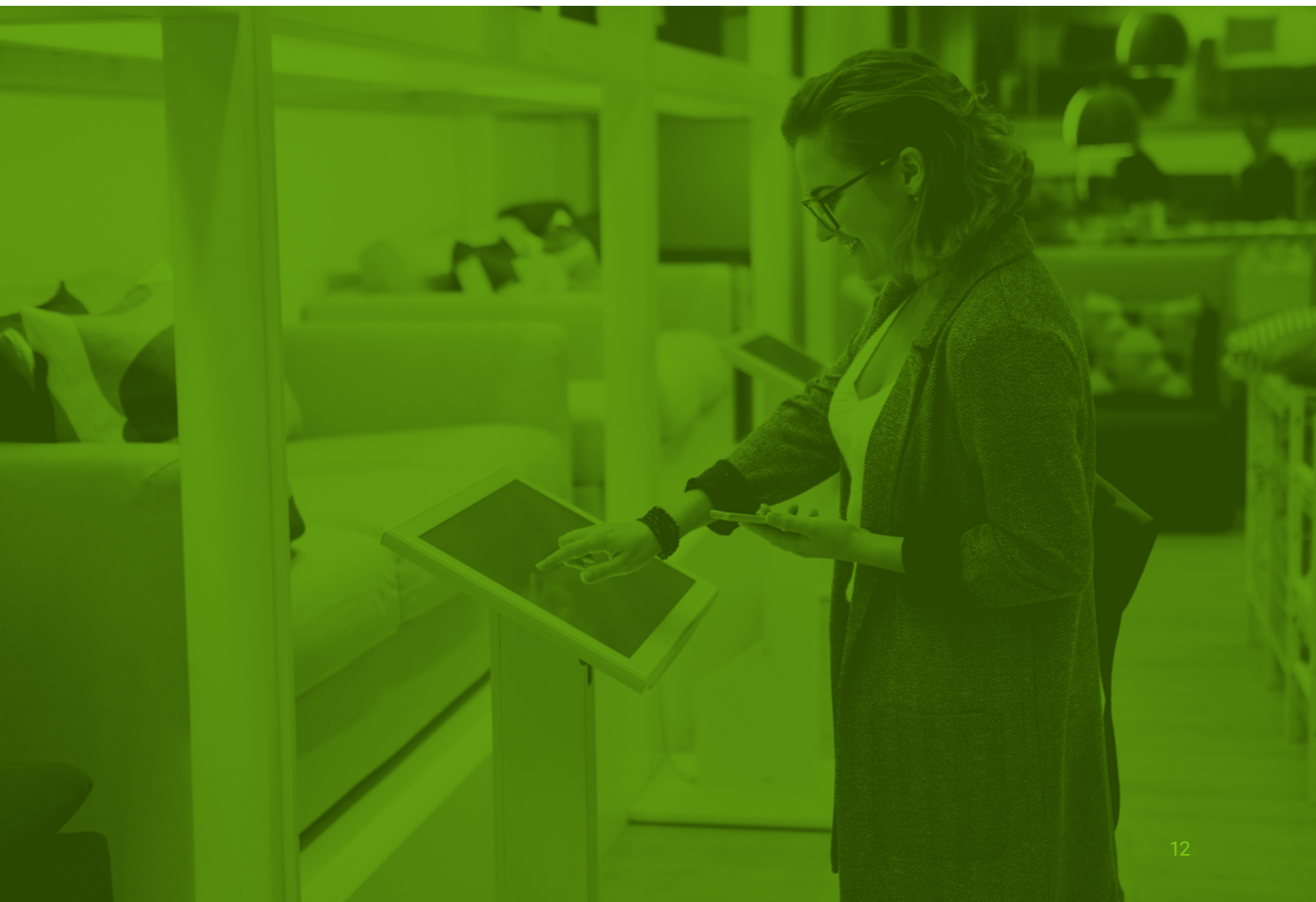
More importantly, however, the company describes these emotions their building sets elicit to the parents. That's because parents will feel better about themselves for providing the opportunity for their children to discover a sense of creativity and pride. LEGO effectively uses emotional content to drive the sale of its toy products to parents.

# Consumers Demand Cutting-edge Experiences

When consumers do visit your website, they expect a web experience on par or better than their favorite apps and platforms.

The frontend experiences need to follow a number of front-end best-practices to intrigue consumers and drive them to CTAs. That's because it will take enormous effort to draw web users from the large social platforms, and any compromise in quality will steer them away.

For forward-thinking brands, that means their websites and apps need to load quickly, and they need to offer smooth experiences as well as intuitive interfaces that are accessible for a wide range of consumers via an even wider range of channels and devices. For these reasons, single page apps (SPAs), progressive web apps (PWAs), and static site generators (SSGs) are gaining popularity.





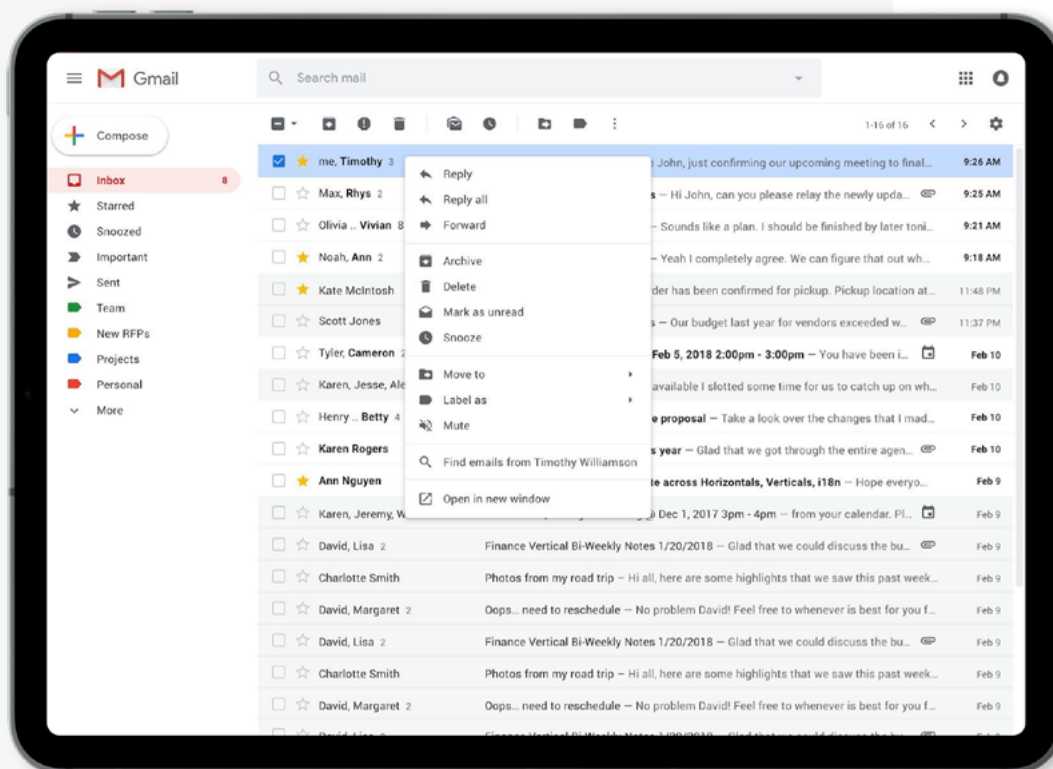
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## Single Page Apps

SPAs enable brands to quickly launch new web experiences that are responsive and easy for users to navigate because they retrieve data on the fly rather than frequently reloading an entire page. SPAs make it possible to create highly dynamic and personalized experiences that drive conversions and user engagement. That's why many of the largest social networks are built with SPA frameworks like React, Angular, and Vue.

### An Example to Follow: Gmail

Ever wondered how Gmail stays so agile, even when your internet connection is having a bad day? Gmail is a single page application, meaning that actions such as viewing, deleting, and categorizing emails is done without waiting for the client-server communication to happen.



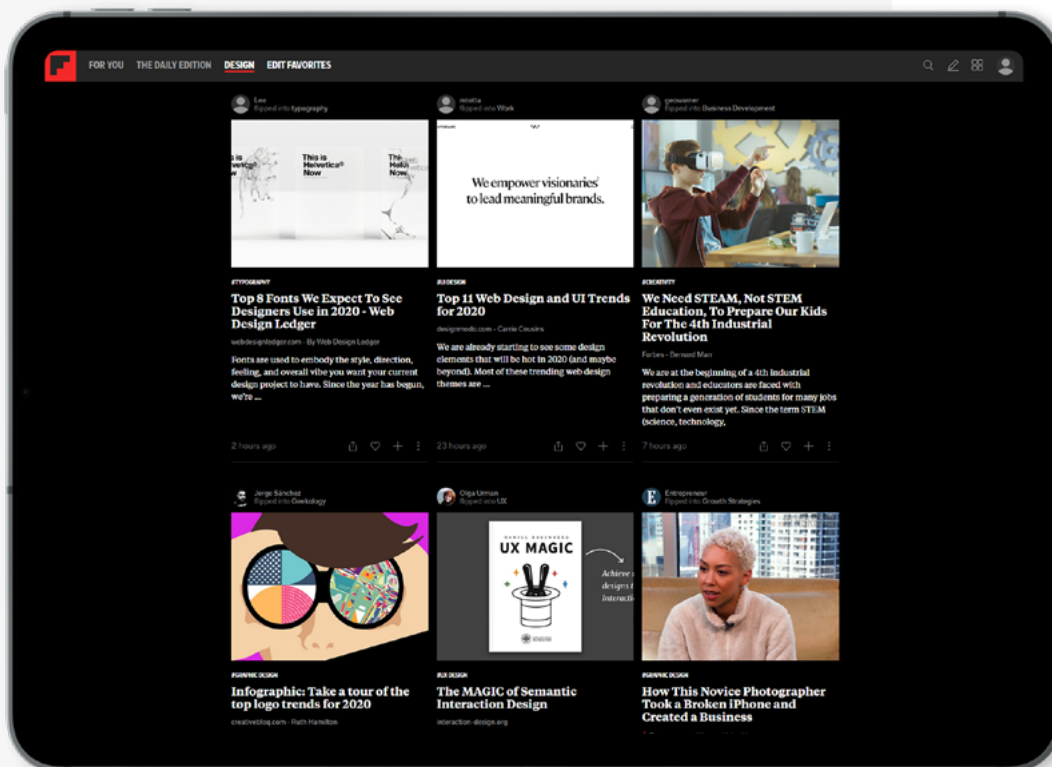
Learn More: [Single Page Applications](#)

## Progressive Web Apps

PWAs — which are almost always SPAs — solve many of the challenges of both traditional websites and native mobile apps. While it may be true that most web usage is on smartphones, building mobile apps isn't easy for many brands. Native apps require development teams familiar with both iOS and Android tooling, which can be expensive and time-consuming to build software with. That's why many companies are turning to PWAs, which combine many of the native features (including improved speed, offline support, installability, and access to smartphone capabilities) without requiring users to download the app through an App Store.

### An Example to Follow: Flipboard

Flipboard used to be a mobile native application exclusively, until they launched their progressive web application. Now, you can access Flipboard from a laptop or desktop with all the trimmings that a mobile app serves up.



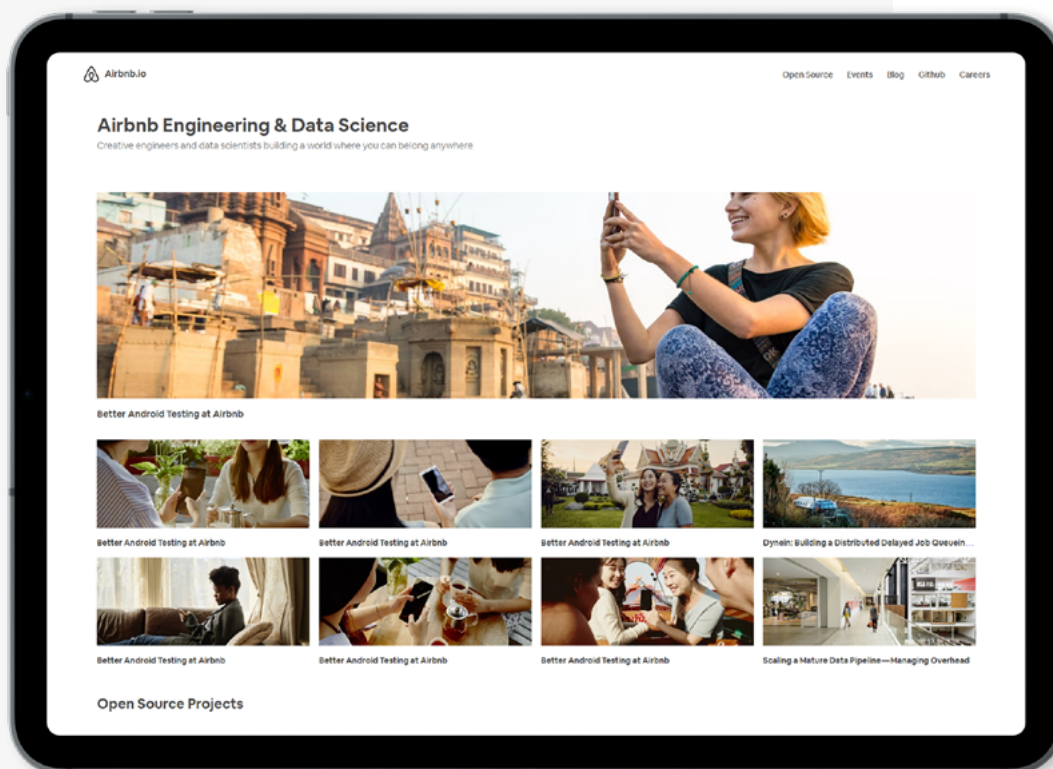
Learn More: [How LOTTO.de Leverages a Progressive Web App](#)

## Static Sites

Finally, many brands opt for a site that leverages a Static Site Generator (SSG) like GatsbyJS or Hugo. In many cases, these SSGs generate React-based SPAs that have vastly improved performance and security. They're also straightforward to deploy to content delivery networks (CDNs) to better take advantage of caching when delivering the web experiences to end-users. With SSGs, companies can quickly launch landing pages and microsites to generate leads and collect customer information without heavy development requirements.

### An Example to Follow: Airbnb.io

Airbnb's engineering and data science website is a great example of a static website. It's purpose is to aggregate relevant articles from Medium and open source projects from GitHub, giving developers and data scientists a central website for research. It's simple, snappy, sleek—and static.



# Voice is Getting Louder

While mobile may have overtaken desktop web usage in recent years, voice search using smart speakers like Amazon Echo and Google Home continues to grow. According to Forrester, [41 million U.S. households already have smart speakers, and they will continue to proliferate in 2020](#). That's why Google recently updated its algorithm to better support voice queries.

## The Role of Google BERT in 2020 and Beyond

BERT, which stands for bidirectional encoder representations from transformers, is Google's technique for natural language processing (NLP) that leverages machine learning. With this new algorithm, Google will better understand the context and intent behind search queries to deliver more relevant results.

**In the post-BERT era, brands need to adjust their approach to top-of-the-funnel content to capture a new generation of Googlers.**

Google BERT is another step forward for search engines to understand humans better. This is crucial for understanding the conversational language that consumers use when interacting with voice devices. For brands, that means the SEO landscape is changing.

The changes in SEO and the growth of voice search on the horizon means brands will need to make changes to their content strategies. In much the same way that websites and apps are shifting towards more targeted and streamlined experiences, so too will content continue to need a more narrow focus. That's because the things consumers search for and the results Google provides are getting more specific and nuanced.

The searches most affected by Google BERT will be informational queries. That's because there is more ambiguity with informational searches than transactional or navigational queries. Brands, therefore, will need to adjust their approach to top-of-the-funnel content to capture a new generation of Googlers.

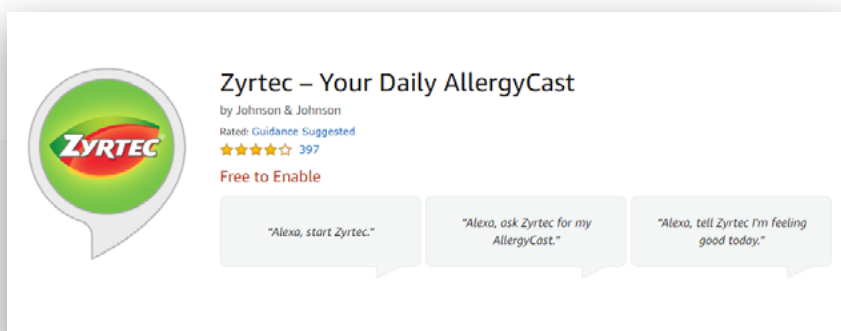
## New Flavours of Content Are Emerging

Top-of-the-funnel — educational, informative, and thought-leadership — content is meant to answer questions consumers may have about the industry and a particular problem they're facing that the brand provides products or services to solve. With the latest Google BERT update, value is placed on direct answers for highly specific informational queries.

Brands, therefore, need to shift their strategy to provide focused answers to long-tail keywords and questions. That means producing snippets of content that succinctly answers specific questions. FAQs or shorter articles around a narrow topic may perform better than general long-form blog posts after the update.

By putting out content that directly answers common consumer questions, brands will be well prepared for the looming increase in voice search queries.

Considering voice search will be crucial, with [some predicting that 30% of searches will be conducted without a screen by 2020](#). In the end, Google is just further pushing what it has said all along: publish high-quality content with the user in mind.



## An Example to Follow: Zyrtec

Allergy medication brand Zyrtec has a clear target market; people with allergies. Their content marketing strategy on the other hand, is far more sophisticated. They released a web app, a mobile app, and an Amazon Alexa Skill that gives their audiences access to daily allergen forecasts in their local area. Using the same data and content, Zyrtec has spread the value they give to their audience across three accessible channels. This is as well as their guides that help people live with allergies.

# Consumer Data is Gold Dust

Along with offering convenient web experiences at informative content whenever and wherever the consumer wants, tailoring content to the individual is becoming critical as well. And this goes beyond knowing the customer's basic information to delivering hyper-personalized digital experiences.



## Hyper-personalization becoming the norm

As previously mentioned, hyper-personalization is becoming a basic necessity for successful online brands. Advanced hyper-personalization strategies leverage artificial intelligence (AI) and real-time data algorithms to provide highly relevant content, products, services, or other information the user may be interested in. Modern consumers are demanding hyper-personalized experiences — not just on the website — but seamlessly across all digital touchpoints as well.

## Big data is critical

Hyper-personalization requires an enormous amount of data to be effective. That means brands need an efficient way to collect, organize, and action consumer data to deliver relevant content and recommend products that lead to conversions. The data can be explicitly given by site visitors or implicitly collected by software in the background. Either way, there are implications to collecting and storing customer data that organizations need to consider.

## Consumer privacy is tightening

Consumer data is valuable for organizations, but it's challenging to safely collect and store under today's consumer privacy laws. First, GDPR came out in Europe, then CCPA affected companies in California. It's only a matter of time until most companies in the U.S. will need to comply with strict consumer privacy laws. These regulations at the basic level require companies to make the data they collect accessible for consumers to view, delete, and opt-out of in the future. For many large organizations, this isn't easy to provide.

## Security is paramount

Keeping all of this data safe is a huge obstacle for IT teams, but brands can't afford the bad publicity and loss of trust that comes from a security breach. That's not to mention the monetary costs and legal issues that result as well.

With all these factors in mind, it's clear that content — and the processes that drive its production and publishing — are critical for brands to provide value to their intended audiences.

# Marketers Need Empowerment, Developers Need Freedom

These massive changes in web experiences, SEO, and content marketing require vastly different technologies and digital processes to remain competitive into the future. The content management system (CMS) that companies leverage needs to empower marketers to deliver personalized web experiences while giving developers the freedom to choose the right tech stack for the task.

## Legacy systems limit freedom

Monolithic content management systems were great for the traditional web and app-based approach to the digital experience, but they're not ready to adapt to today's omnichannel market.

These systems tightly coupled the frontend website or mobile app to the backend data and content, which bonded developers and marketers together. Rather than facilitating collaboration, however, this burdened both teams by limiting their freedom. In turn, these monolithic systems have stifled innovation and raise the total cost of ownership (TCO) for delivering digital experiences.

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## APIs brings true freedom

The first step towards freedom is choosing a headless CMS with powerful APIs. Many legacy systems have tacked on APIs after the fact, but they're not built from the ground up to be headless — and this matters. That's because APIs give developers the tools, frameworks, and languages they deem best for each project without being limited to a particular tech stack. Meanwhile, legacy systems often dictate or severely limit the tools a developer can use. Developer freedom leads to better customer experiences by bringing new functionality to market much faster.

Learn More: [What is headless](#)

## Hybrid features are critical

While headless empowers developers, the marketing team is often left in the dark when it comes to viewing and editing the web experiences they're creating. Some CMS vendors, however, have gone a step further by offering marketers the user interfaces they need to create, modify, and preview content across devices and channels. This hybrid approach to content management empowers marketers and developers alike to streamline the development of content-driven web apps and other frontends.

Learn More: [Hybrid-Headless](#)

## Omnichannel hyper-personalization becomes a reality

The hybrid-headless CMS not only enables omnichannel content delivery but hyper-personalization as well. That's because API-driven software is poised to connect with a disparate set of third-party systems to unify content and data. Digital marketers need a centralized interface to manage the customer experience, and headless technologies can enable this. With the right approach to building out the digital experience platform (DXP) in place, that is.

Learn More: [Hyper-personalization](#)

# A Best-of-Breed Digital Experience Platform Holds the Key

The modern DXP needs to go beyond pure content management, and allow brands to seamlessly create and deploy hyper-personalized customer experiences across digital touchpoints. For many companies that means ditching the legacy systems and adopting a flexible tech stack that's adaptable to future customer demands.

## The limitations of suite systems

The idea of a large suite system to handle all of a brand's DX needs sounds great on paper, but rarely fits the bill in practice. Monolithic systems can't keep up with the latest trends, and stifle innovation in the long run. Many brands that rely on these systems find that there's only generic functionality, and not the specific tools their marketing teams need. The problem is that these systems target the broader market, and don't expect its users to need to extend or modify the platform. Many organizations therefore cannot meet their exact business requirements with their suite solution, and a migration nightmare is looming.

When choosing a CMS brands need to look for the features and capabilities that lay the foundation for a best-of-breed approach—which is key to offering cutting-edge customer experiences across touchpoints.

## Why brands need to build their own DXP

Similar to how developers should have the freedom to select their tools of choice, a company's marketers, product managers, and sales leaders should have the ability to select apps and software to build a tech stack that suits them. Rather than choosing software at the organizational level — like with suite solutions — with the best of breed approach, individual teams can leverage niche software that fulfills highly specific requirements that drive their digital marketing efforts.

When choosing a CMS, therefore, companies need to look for the features and capabilities that lay the foundation for a best-of-breed approach—which is key to offering cutting-edge customer experiences across touchpoints.

That means numerous options for connecting to third-party systems and building out frontends such as REST APIs, GraphQL, or other integration points. Beyond this, the ability to consume, store, and action data and content from a wide range of systems is critical. The best of breed DXP needs to be ready to provide a seamless experience for marketers to leverage a multitude of MarTech software solutions, without putting a burden on IT staff.



# How JobRad Gained 20x More Concurrent Users and Courted 15,000 German Businesses

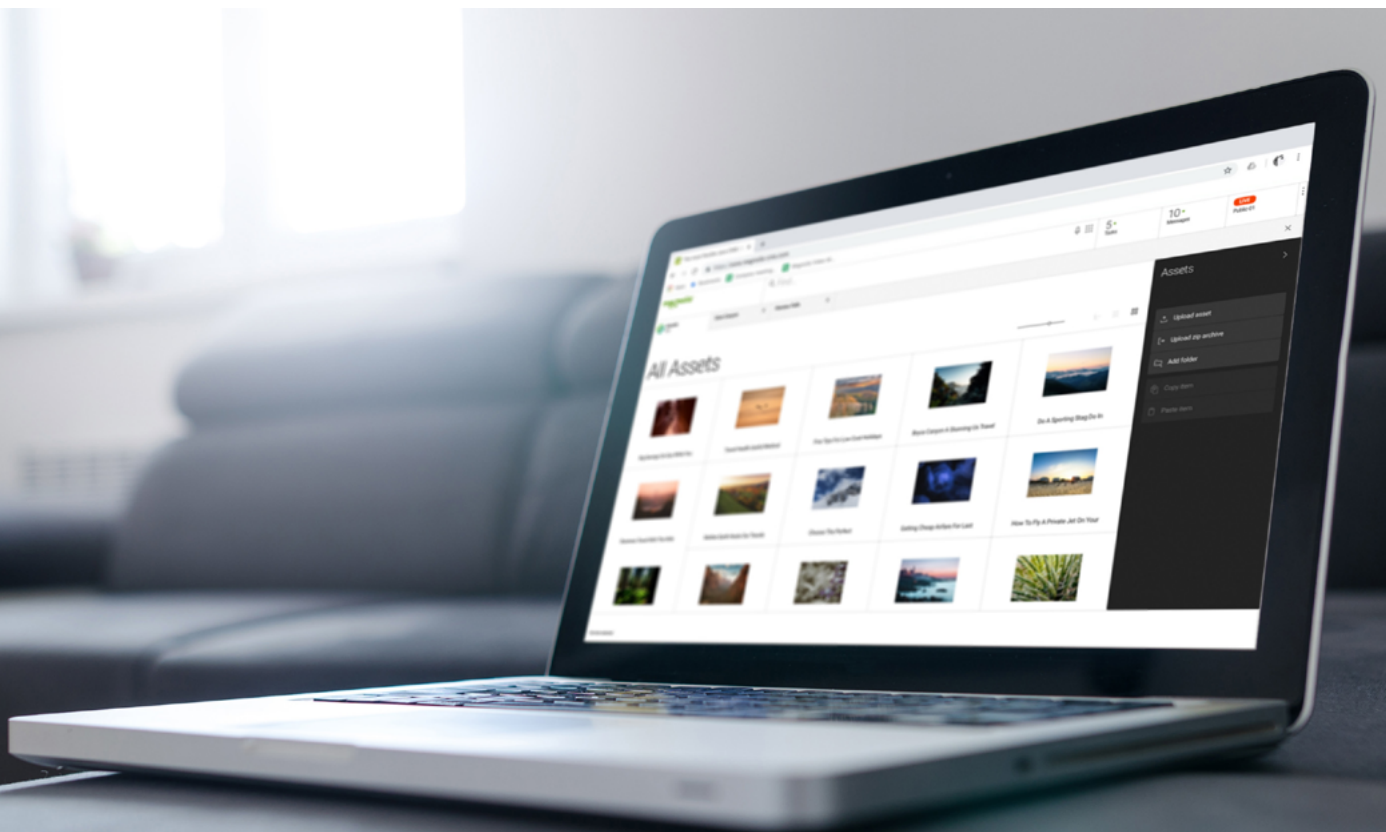
All in, it's clear the web has been making a dramatic shift over the past few years. Consumers aren't coming to a company's website like they used to, so brands need to find their audience on whichever channels they're using. Brands need to adjust their SEO and content strategies to publish highly informative content that's easy to find using conversational voice queries, and they need to safely collect and leverage customer data to drive hyper-personalized experiences. The only way to overcome these lofty obstacles is to revamp the digital processes and technologies the company leverages with a best of breed DXP approach. And that's exactly what JobRad has done.

**"It's fun working with Magnolia, it's really easy and it fulfills all our needs."  
— JobRad**

[JobRad](#) — an innovative German bike leasing company — needed to revamp its company website to offer a more informative and dynamic digital experience. Using Magnolia CMS as the foundation, JobRad was able to quickly launch a new PWA using the tooling their developers chose themselves. The company also leveraged Magnolia's Light Development capabilities to create a custom FAQ module. With this new interface, marketing teams can curate common customer questions about their complex industry, and easily publish them across customer touchpoints. JobRad's FAQ content future proofs the company for a Google Bert and the coming influx of voice search.



Magnolia CMS has been preparing for this new wave of web experiences by launching numerous innovative features and capabilities, including [hybrid tools like the Stories App](#) and a [visual SPA editor](#). Magnolia is poised to act as a [centralized content hub](#) for bringing [hyper-personalized content](#) to customers in the new web era.





Magnolia is a leading digital experience software company. We help brands outsmart their competition through better customer experiences and faster DX projects. Get full headless flexibility and seamless workflows across best-of-breed digital experience stacks. Global leaders such as New York Times, JetBlue, Avis and Atlassian all rely on Magnolia for maximum reliability, high speed project implementation and exceptional omnichannel experiences.

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