

accenture

AGILITY IN ONLINE SHOPPING

WITH EXPERIENCE DRIVEN COMMERCE





ACCENTURE INTERACTIVE

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Customers don't just buy products, they buy experiences. For any organization looking to remain competitive, adapting your services to meet customer needs and support a smooth journey is essential.

COVID-19 has accelerated e-commerce growth like never before. Imprisoned by lockdowns and wary of public places, many people have shifted their shopping habits online – some for the first time ever. In times like these, a flexible architecture is key for your organization to remain agile and adaptable to fuel growth. By decoupling frontend from the backend, headless commerce enables companies to build and optimize a platform quickly and efficiently. This allows them to deploy changes easily and scale components that support their customer needs and business goals.

WHAT CHALLENGES COMPANIES FACE IN THEIR DIGITAL LANDSCAPE

As technology evolves, experience has become an important differentiator for customers. For companies to compete, they must have the flexibility to meet the ever-changing expectations of users.

To succeed in this marketplace, organizations need to take an agile approach to all areas, especially when it comes to solutions that involve customer experience. We see a lot of clients facing challenges with:



Difficulty in scaling and updating

Often, changes in experience solutions require a full deployment of the entire application. This results in increased downtime due to testing and development, even for small changes. And when it comes to bigger changes, such as a full version upgrade, making this change frequently turns out to become a separate project by itself.



Problems with expandability

New touchpoints – such as voice experiences, chatbots, smart home appliances, and wearables – require different frontends that use different technologies with modern API's. Organizations face the challenge of connecting all of this into one seamless experience.

Organizations need to have a system flexible enough to adapt at a rapid pace. They also need the freedom to explore better-fit solutions and build out components that can help drive their business.

LET CUSTOMERS DRIVE YOUR BUSINESS

The reality of today is that people don't buy things; they buy experiences. A seamless and purposeful interaction has become key to sustained growth and success.

To keep up with user expectations, an organization needs to make sure their commerce is experience driven. Experience driven commerce evolves your platform to have the agility to rapidly meet changing customer demands. To determine if your platform is adaptable and able to follow customer demand, ask yourself:

- 1 How easily can I make new touchpoints available?**
- 2 Can I quickly and simply change components of my digital application?**
- 3 Do I have the ability to deploy smaller chunks of changes, or do I need to deploy the entire application?**

A key component of experience driven commerce is building a unified customer experience across all touchpoints to provide value to your customer. In order to achieve this, most companies need to reassess their e-commerce platforms for agility and adaptability. With a wide array of industries and varying customer demands, the one-size-fits all approach doesn't work for everyone. Organizations need to explore and prioritize solutions that better fit their needs and business goals.



HEADLESS COMMERCE

INNOVATIVE AND FLEXIBLE

While traditional commerce platforms involve a contained complex system with many internal dependencies, headless commerce allows for separation of the front and backend. Building a platform based on a headless architecture allows for creating a network of self-contained components, independently connected through APIs.

This solution allows organizations to focus their frontend on display and customer engagement while the backend arranges business logic and data. Separation between the two ensures that changes and deployments can be carried out easily, without affecting the entire platform. By eliminating most of the dependencies between the front and backend, headless commerce offers a flexible, scalable solution that can help businesses meet their experience driven goals.

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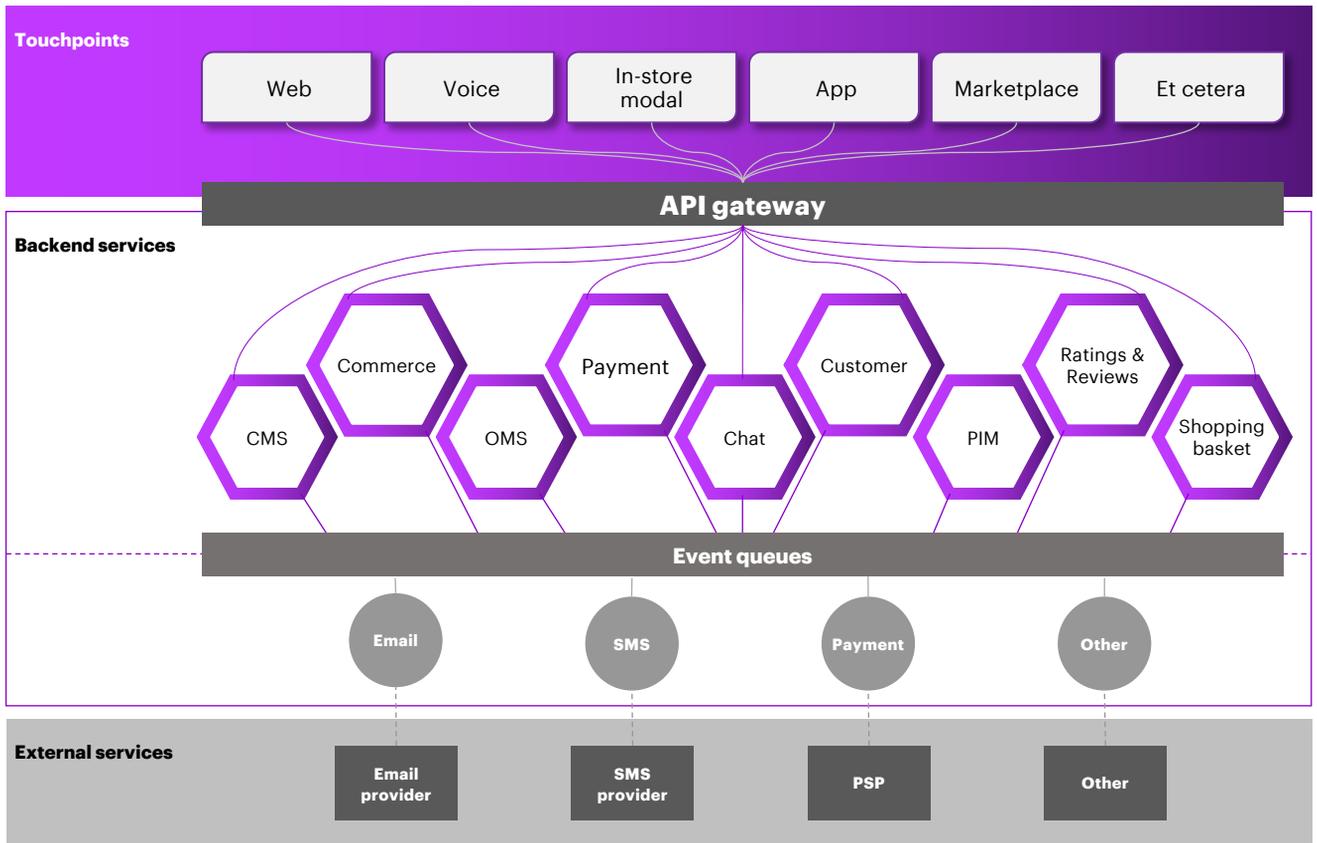
HOW HEADLESS COMMERCE WORKS

In simple terms, headless commerce means wrapping all the business logic in a set of APIs powered by specialized backend services and exposing them so that any frontend can latch on and provide the desired experience. This results in a highly agile and customizable platform that can grow and change as quickly as your customers' expectations. Compartmentalized components mean that any individual part of the platform can be easily scaled without disrupting the rest of the application.

As these backend services are dedicated to execute specific functions, such as holding cart information or making payments, it allows you to build a modular solution where concerns are better separated. This reduces the need of services to understand the business logic and details in other services and inherently simplifies the total stack of code. Giving you the freedom to add, change, remove and replace any of these components easily, without affecting other services and loss of functionality.

Headless commerce, also referred to as 'Composable Commerce', allows you to compose a platform of selected parts that meet your particular business goals. This framework gives you the flexibility to choose the way you want to build your frontend for your sales channels, while developers can work on making enhancements in the backend separately from your frontend development. By eliminating the 'head' of your platform, you can pursue innovative opportunities to enhance the customer experience without being held back by a ridged framework.

HOW HEADLESS COMMERCE WORKS



Touchpoints

Customer and employee touchpoints contain as less business logic as possible. Using API's they are interacting with the services.

Dedicated backend services

One set of the backend services include all business logic and communicate with the customer touchpoints and other services using their API layer.

The other type of backend services at the outer boundaries of the system only include logic to connect with external services and execute their task when a certain event happens.

WHAT **ISSUES** IT SOLVES

Headless commerce gives you the opportunity to use 'best of breed' platforms for the core elements of digital commerce like CMS, Search, and Payment that are specialized in their function. By giving you the flexibility to choose and the loosely coupled experience solution architecture, headless commerce comes with several benefits:



Cost and speed of change

Organizations are able to easily scale and deploy components without disrupting the entire platform, resulting in shorter release cycles and faster time to market.



Freedom from a fixed framework

Decide what backend functionalities and frontend technologies work best for you and replace or scale only what is needed without touching the rest of the platform.





Ownership of your platform

With the ability to use your preferred ‘best of breed’ solutions, you can tailor your platform to suit your business goals and only pay for what you need.



Adapting to the future

The flexibility to easily change and scale your platform allows for continuous improvements in response to customer and business needs. Headless commerce promotes business agility and allows organizations to let the customer experience lead.

By building a pay-what-you-use platform, you can integrate your preferred solutions and create more engaging and relevant experiences for your customers. The agility and adaptability of independently connected APIs allow businesses to pursue and deliver new opportunities for customer engagement. This ability to adapt and deliver quickly will determine who will have the competitive edge in the years to come.

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HEADLESS COMMERCE, THE SILVER BULLET?

For companies focused on providing advanced customer experiences, headless architecture may be a very good fit. However, with greater flexibility comes greater responsibility. With no 'head' for headless architecture, managing the separate microservices can be challenging. Before shifting platforms, organizations might want to consider a few points:

- Do you have the right technical people in place who understand the interdependency between individual components and can manage it properly?
- Do you have the capacity to manage the deployment infrastructure for different components?
- Do you have the capabilities to manage multiple vendors and costs that come with utilizing multiple individual platforms?

On the one hand, headless commerce allows for greater flexibility to meet customer needs and an easy adaption for future changes. On the other hand, it requires a strong technical capability to help build and maintain it. If you are a (new) business and looking for a short time to market, you might be served better by an all-in-one approach. However, with continuous commitment from stakeholders and the right strategic partners, companies who take on the headless commerce approach will benefit greatly. This agile solution puts organizations ahead of their competition by allowing them to continuously adapt and innovate based on what their customers want.

READY TO PUT CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AT THE CORE OF YOUR COMMERCE PLATFORM?

Interested in partnering with Accenture Interactive to build your experience driven commerce? Get in touch to schedule a virtual coffee with Jasvent Singh.

AUTHOR

Jasvent Singh

Experience Solution Architect
Manager at Accenture Interactive
jasvent.singh@accenture.com

ABOUT ACCENTURE INTERACTIVE

In a world of uncertainty, today's leading brands are creating promises not to just shareholders but to customers, employees and societies. Promises of consequence that drive purposeful change for everyone.

We believe Experiences are where these promises are felt. The powerful convergence of marketing and technology in today's marketplace means brands are no longer built through advertising, but through Experiences.

We connect deep human and business insights with the possibilities of technology to define and deliver new realities. Experiences that can make lives easier, healthier, safer, more productive and rewarding. In order to unlock growth, marketing organizations need a new partner—one that is part business consultancy, part creative agency and part technology powerhouse to enable them to design, build, communicate and run the best Experiences on the planet.

At Accenture Interactive, we're reimagining business through Experience. Visit www.accenture.com/interactive.