



HEADLESS COMMERCE: THE BASICS

Learn What Headless Commerce Is, How It Works, and Whether It's Right for You



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What is Headless Commerce?

An (almost) entirely jargon-free summary.

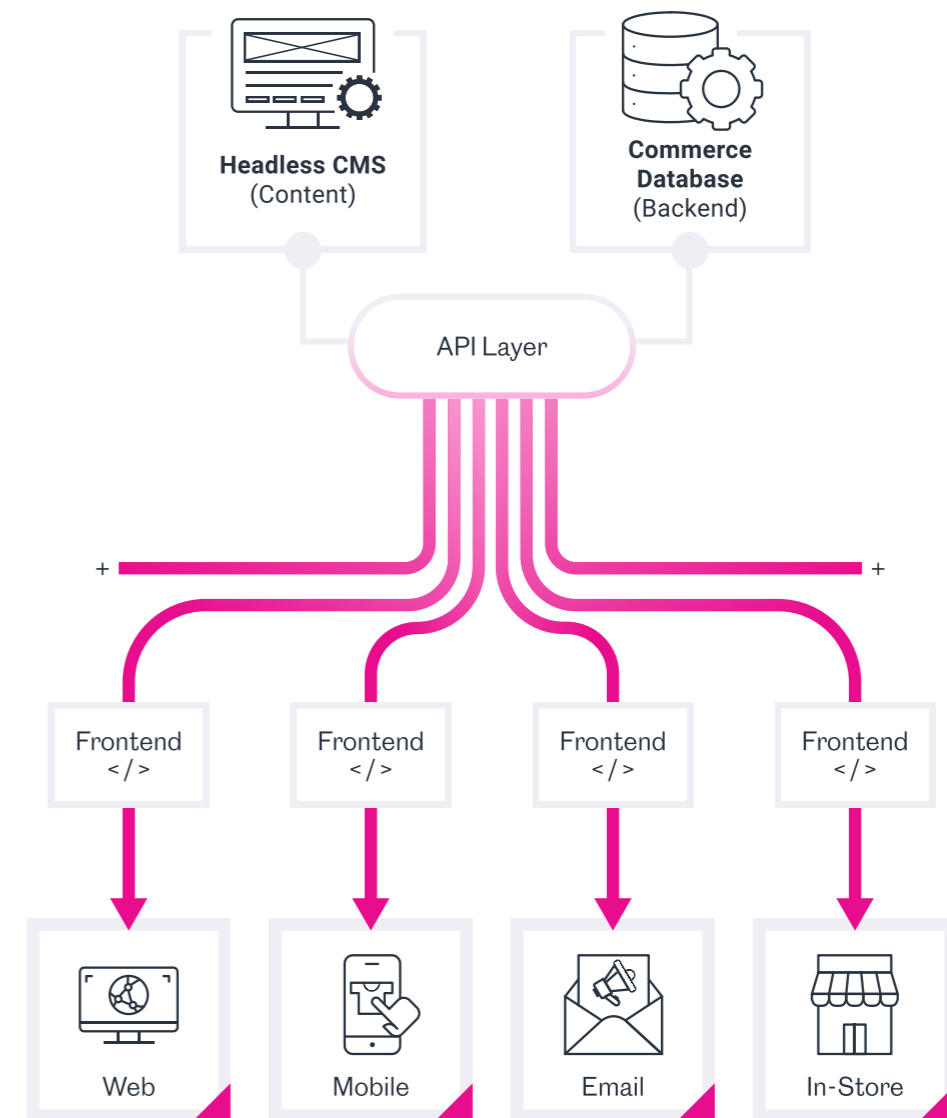
The term 'headless' means the frontend (head) that consumers can see – e.g. a web page or mobile app – is separated from the backend that makes it all work. And that one backend platform uses application programme interfaces (APIs) to provide content and functionality to however many frontend 'heads' you need. This approach means you can do all sorts of things to those individual frontends without affecting anything in the backend (and vice versa).

"Why does this matter?" we hear you ask.

Consumer appetite for online content is more insatiable than ever. People want information at their fingertips, instantly, on any device, wherever they're interacting with your brand. And for maximum impact that content needs to be personalised and timely.

It's a huge challenge to manage all those moving parts. And there are a whole bunch of different tools and functions that need to come together to create a consistently brilliant, joined-up digital experience that will get you the results you need.

Headless Commerce Diagram



(Scalable Digital Experiences)

The old 'monolithic' way of doing things – where your backend and frontend are tightly joined and it takes a lot of time and manual effort to make individual changes – simply doesn't give you the speed and flexibility you need. But when your frontends operate independently from the backend, you can make changes to the things your audience sees without having to make heavy duty technical changes behind the scenes.

Creating the experiences you want, wherever you want, is whole lot faster and easier. And you can do it all from a single platform.

Monolithic Commerce Diagram



(Limited Digital Experiences)



5 Major Problems You can Solve with Headless Commerce

1

LACK OF CONTROL OVER YOUR DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

There are so many ways to interact and communicate with customers. Website, app, social media, email, in-store, internet of things – it's endless. And you need need to present your brand consistently across all those different places. Customers expect it. They want a connected and seamless experience wherever they find you and whichever channel they purchase through.

Trying to create the experience for each of those channels individually through your backend is a nightmare, however. It takes a lot of time and effort. And it therefore becomes much harder to create a consistently brilliant digital experience that differentiates you from your competitors.

Headless commerce solves that by allowing you to make changes to any of your frontend elements without messing with the backend architecture.

Customer Expectation Diagram



2

CLUNKY INTERNAL WORKFLOWS

So much to do, so little time. It's an old adage but it rings truer today than ever. With eCommerce growth and an increase in content production, internal workflows and processes need to be as efficient as possible.

Otherwise you end up with bottlenecks, while your customers and internal teams are putting pressure on you to deliver. You have people spending too much time duplicating content and changes across different systems. Manual effort is high. Productivity is low. Getting anything produced and live is taking far too long.

With the right headless provider, every employee – technical or not – can do everything they need within the same single platform. And they don't have to rely on each other to make any changes.

3

POOR SITE PERFORMANCE

Customers don't wait around. And anything less than perfect when interacting with your brand is a barrier to them engaging further. They don't want frustrations. They just want things to work.

That's why your site performance is so crucial. If it loads too slowly it could lose you sales and negatively impact your search engine rankings. And if you can't scale fast enough to meet demand, and high traffic volumes like the holiday period crash your site, your potential customers are likely heading elsewhere.

A headless approach means frontend elements like your web pages will perform much faster, and you can scale them individually without putting pressure on the backend.

4

SLOW SPEED TO MARKET

Everything to do with eCommerce is moving quickly. Change is about the only known. But with so much change comes the need to be constantly iterating and evolving. Your speed to market must keep up.

You have a large backlog of user experience changes and ideas that you need to implement. You're making updates way less frequently than you need. You can't run as many experiments as you want. And all these things are causing you headaches and putting you behind your competitors.

Because you don't need to mess around with the backend to make changes to your frontend displays, headless allows you to implement new things and react to the market faster.

5

A NEED FOR THIRD-PARTY APPS

There are so many brilliant commerce solutions out there right now across search, payments, analytics, content management, you name it. But if you can't use them, what good are they?

If your platform restricts you certain approved plugins, you'll never be able to truly build the digital experience you want for your customers. You'll always have to compromise to fit into the rigid, clunky templates you've been given.

Headless gives you the freedom to adopt any apps you want, so you can build a totally customised digital experience platform that meets your needs.

5 Major Benefits You'll Get From Going Headless

1

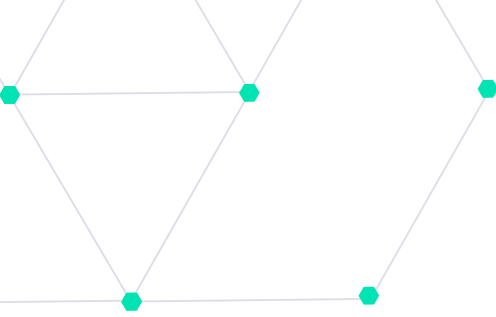
SPEED – PLENTY OF IT

First, a headless approach means you can make changes and push releases live much faster, reacting to the market in almost real time. Instead of taking weeks or months to get things live, you can do it in days or even hours.

Second, headless commerce also allows you to get value from your platform faster. Due to the nature of the headless environment, you can take your migration one small piece at a time. You don't need to completely rip out the old tech and start from scratch. It's small steps to big change, where you can see value bit by bit.

Lastly, a headless approach makes your frontends perform faster. Your customers will appreciate the sub-second load times, even at peak traffic, and you can expect a boost to your search engine ranking along with increased customer satisfaction and conversion.

| Headless means speed. In so many ways.



2 WAY MORE FREEDOM

By separating your frontends and backends, you'll be able to do whatever you want with your architecture, bringing in the tools and solutions you actually want instead of being restricted to certain tools or trying to recreate everything yourself. And if you need to update or change any tools individually there's no interference with the backend, so the whole process is much quicker and easier.

All this will make your developers happy. But what about other users like content creators? With the ability to add any tools they want, they can create, preview, schedule and publish content however and wherever they need to, all from one platform, without the need to code.

3 THE ABILITY TO SCALE AND MAKE CHANGES FAST

Because a headless approach uses a lot of different apps and services that aren't tied to each other, you can scale each individual element up or down whenever you need to. Peak periods? No problem. With your frontend and backend working independently of each other you can scale the frontend elements without putting your backend systems under pressure.

And because your frontend changes don't need any modifications to backend code, as they would in traditional platforms, a headless approach also lets you move and react more quickly. You can experiment often, learn fast and keep on improving your experience.

4 TOTAL CONTROL OVER YOUR DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

Although it's headless, you can have as many 'heads' as you like, meaning you can have multiple frontends, from social channels to mobile apps. You can add or remove them quickly without adding any more complexity, as they simply draw on the underlying APIs.

So it's much easier to create the experience you truly want across all those different touchpoints, using any tools and features you need.

5 BETTER CUSTOMIZATION AND PERSONALIZATION

No more being handcuffed to prescribed templates and structures that weren't actually designed for your business. Going headless allows you to set up your frontend how you want, presenting your brand and content in the way that has the right impact.

And you can easily add in functionality that delivers contextual and personalized content, products, search results, you name it, wherever you want it. You can draw on data to create tailored customer experiences, helping your message have more impact.



5 Things To Think About Before Going Headless

1

GET PLANNING

Have a definite roadmap for how you'll go about the move the headless. Will you rip out the old system entirely and replace it? Will you do it bit by bit? Will you migrate the frontend or backend first? Will you build or buy?

There are a multitude of ways you can go about the implementation. We recommend a phased approach as there is less risk and disruption involved.

2

UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT ON INTERNAL TEAMS

No change comes without any knock-on effects. Good or bad, make sure you understand how going headless will affect your employees and teams and the way you do things.

Look at how you might need to organize yourselves internally or rethink how you're approaching products and developments. It's team structure but also mindset. Ask yourself how you'll marry modern headless tools and services with new ways of working to help separate teams work better together – development and marketing teams, for example.



3

DO YOUR RESEARCH

Know what solutions you need and what is going to bring value to the business. There's not necessarily a 'best' option on the market – it's about analyzing vendors to see whether they can provide what you need.

There are a lot of options to sift through. And it can feel overwhelming. If you need help getting your head around it all, read our headless CMS buyer's guide.

4

AIM TO GET MOVING FAST

There's no time like the present. At some point all that planning needs to turn into implementation.

Thankfully, with headless, this can happen pretty quickly, regardless of whether you're adopting a full replacement or taking a more iterative approach. Both paths are relatively fast with even a small team of experts.

5

KNOW WHAT HAPPENS AFTER GO-LIVE

Life doesn't stop after go-live. Constant iteration and that shift in mindset we mentioned earlier means you'll be working and thinking differently. But what doesn't change is the need to know where your priorities will lay next.

The great news is you'll be in a strong position to make those high priority decisions by adapting your business, tooling and processes with confidence. The once complex monolithic decisions are now broken down into much smaller and more manageable components.

Next Steps

Feel like headless commerce could be a good option for your business? And/or want to know more? Get in touch with our expert team by emailing contact@amplience.com or visiting amplience.com



Amplience powers digital-first brands and retailers with the freedom to do more. Our low-code CMS, DAM and Digital Experience Management platform allows more than 350 of the world's leading brand teams to manage content, not code. The result is a rapid ROI for our clients who are delivering data and insight-driven customer experiences that drive deeper, more valuable customer relationships. Amplience supports the industry's transition to Microservice, API-first, Cloud and Headless (MACH) technologies, is MACH certified and an executive member of the MACH Alliance.

Named a Strong Performer, Amplience was recognized by Forrester in The Forrester Wave™: Agile Content Management Systems (CMSes), Q1 2021 report with the highest possible scores attained in the criteria of decoupled delivery, deployment and system performance, components, and marketplaces.

Powering customer experiences for the world's most innovative brands, Amplience's customers include Ulta Beauty, Coach, GAP, Crate & Barrel, Harry Rosen and Missguided.

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