



WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN GOING HEADLESS

The Ultimate Business Case





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This guide answers all these questions and more, outlining what headless is.

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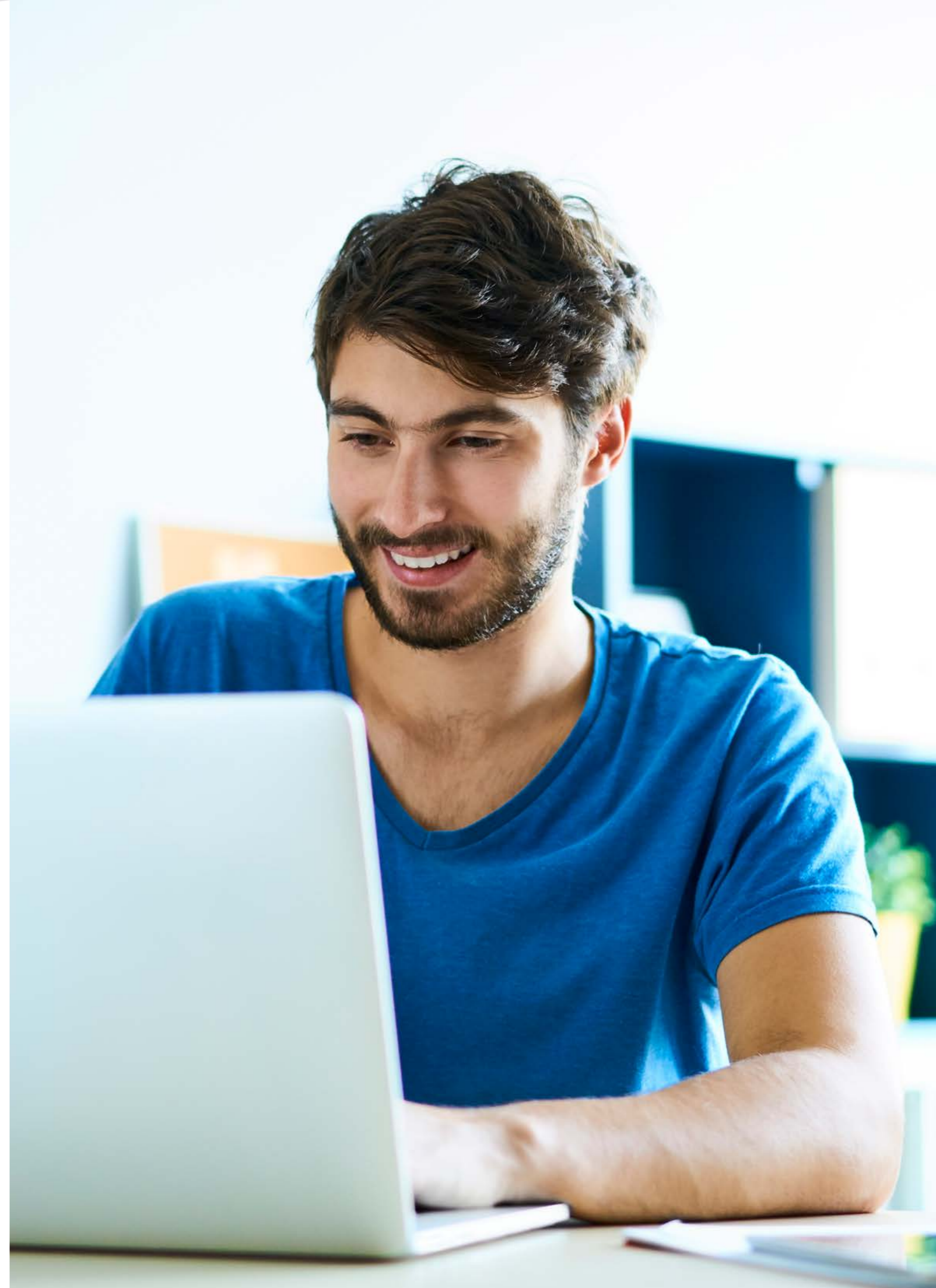
20 What Should You Expect When Going Headless?

Take the time to outline what you want to achieve, why you think this is the right approach for your business.

Introduction

No doubt you've heard a lot about headless. But what is it really all about? Why is it better than other approaches? And how can it benefit you and your organization?

This guide answers all these questions and more, outlining what headless is and the benefits it brings and giving you a deeper understanding of what you can expect. By the end of this guide we hope to have mitigated any misconceptions and helped you decide whether headless is right for your business.



What Does Headless Actually Mean?

And How Is It Different From a Traditional Approach?

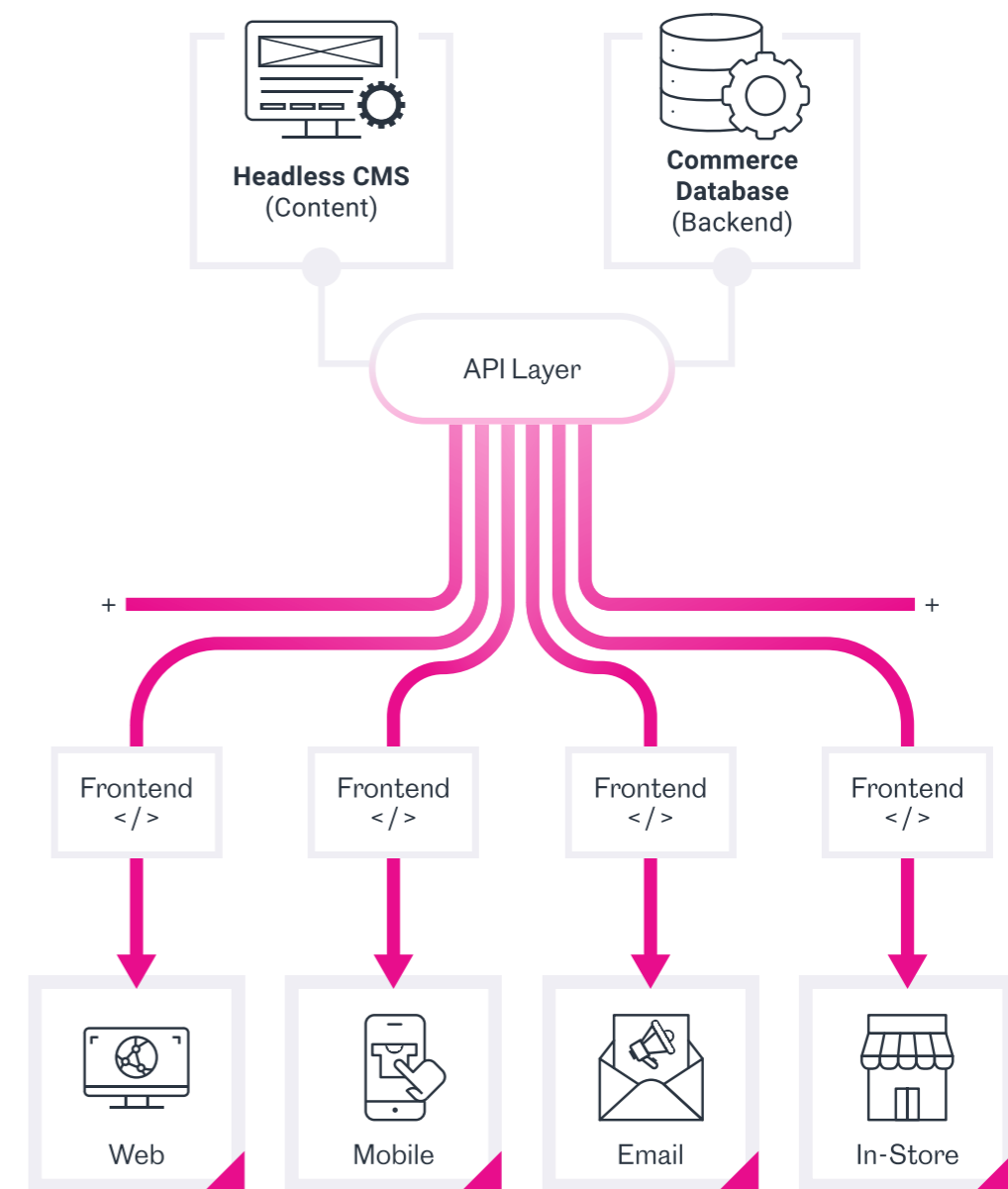
In a headless architecture, the frontends and backends have been decoupled, with APIs used to connect the storage and logic – your commerce functionality – with all your ‘heads’ or presentation layers.

These presentation layers can be anything from your website to social commerce, marketplaces, internet of things (IoT) devices, native apps or in-store kiosks – all the channels your customers are interacting with. This separation of the frontend and backend gives you the flexibility to choose the components you want and need, such as personalization functionality and search tools.

And you can update or change these components more easily as your business adapts and grows, without affecting the rest of your stack. You’re essentially building an evolving suite of tools specifically designed for your business.

As everything is served over APIs, all your frontends can draw on and interact with those services in a consistent way, essentially pulling on the same data from the same tools. All of this empowers your teams to deliver more consistent and meaningful digital experiences for your customers.

Headless Commerce Diagram



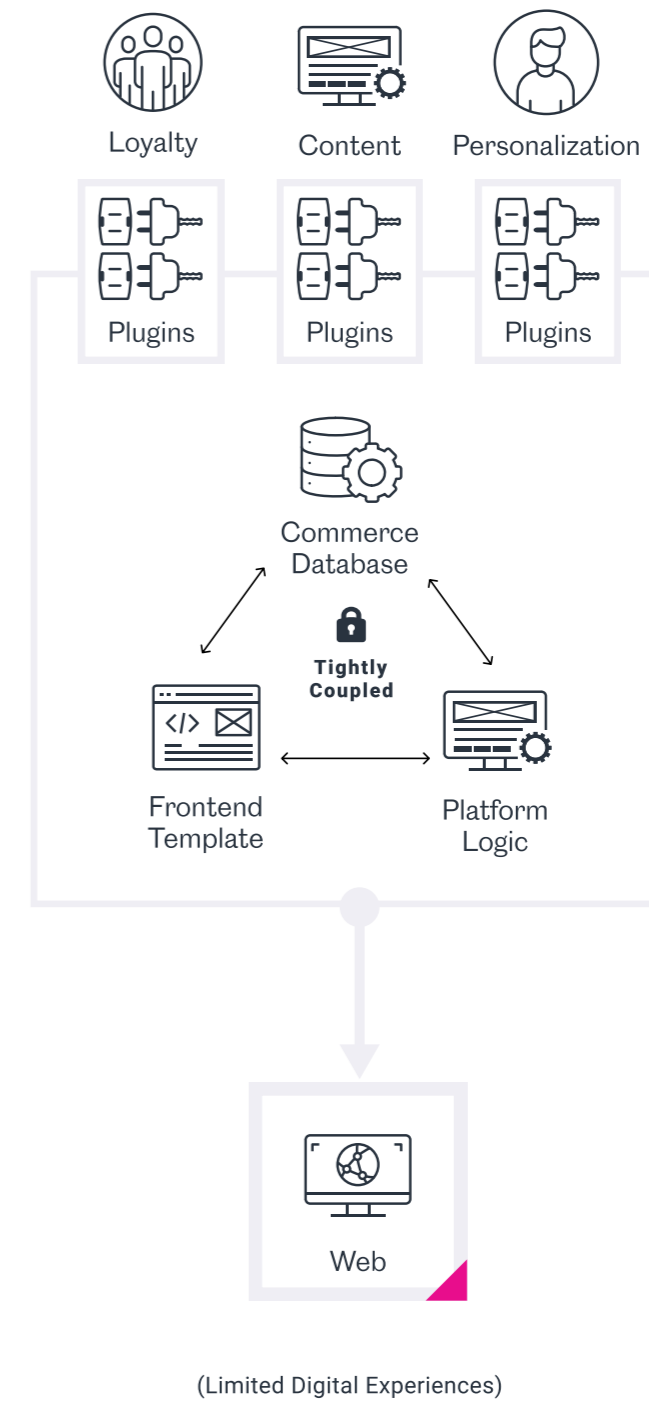
The Traditional Approach

Headless differs from a more traditional, commerce-led approach in which the frontend and backend are coupled together. This approach offers some great benefits as well. The architecture is less complex so it requires less resources to maintain. And templates and out-of-the-box tools can help you build your customer experience.

As your business grows, however, and you want the agility to evolve and differentiate your customer experience quickly, this can prove a lot harder given it's intertwined with the rest of the architecture.

That's where headless comes in.

Monolithic Commerce Diagram



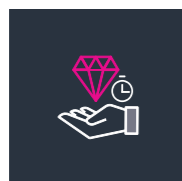
What Are the Upsides of Going Headless?

12 Good Reasons to Make the Switch



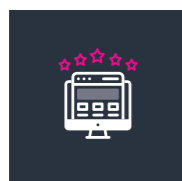
1. ONGOING AGILITY

A headless approach means constant iteration, not long sprints. This means you can push updates live in hours or days not the weeks or months that you might be used to, allowing constant optimization and innovation.



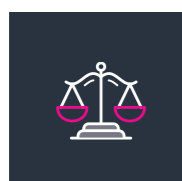
2. REALIZE VALUE QUICKER

Given you can migrate to headless one part at a time, you can start to see the return much quicker than when fully replatforming. It's about taking small steps to see bigger change. And it also means you learn on the go and apply the knowledge to other parts of the migration.



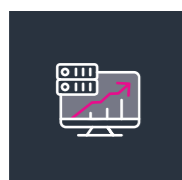
3. INCREASED FRONTEND PERFORMANCE

Decoupling your frontends means their performance will improve. You'll be looking at sub-second load times, even with increased traffic. Search engines will reward you with improved rankings and you'll also see improved customer satisfaction.



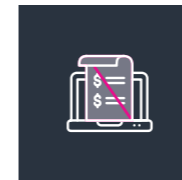
4. SCALE LIKE NEVER BEFORE

With your solutions not tied to each other, you can scale them all individually, with no affect to your response time. This means less risk and more confidence as you grow.



5. A PLATFORM AGILE ENOUGH TO GROW WITH YOU

Move and react to the market and to business needs how you want. Experiment often and with freedom, especially as it won't affect the backend, and then learn and adapt even quicker. It empowers continuous improvement.



6. NO LENGTHY REPLATFORMING OR COSTLY UPGRADE CYCLES

A headless approach means all your eggs are no longer in the one basket. You don't have to spend a lot of time, effort or money upgrading your platform or ripping it out to replace it. Just deal with each vendor and component individually.



7. DEVELOPER FLEXIBILITY

Developers are empowered with headless. Pick the frontend tools, frameworks and languages they have experience in and that meet your business needs. You get to build your architecture of choice.



8. DELIVER TRUE OMNICHANNEL EXPERIENCES

With multiple frontends you can operate across as many channels as you want, be it social, mobile apps, kiosks, IoT, etc, all using the same powerful data and backend logic. You can ensure more consistency across them all as a result and deliver more engaging digital experiences throughout.



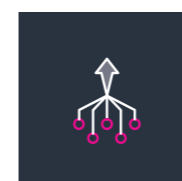
9. FRONTEND FREEDOM

Forget prescribed templates and user experience (UX) design – headless frontends let you implement your own UX. No constraints, just the ability to build, design and customize your online brand presence how you want.



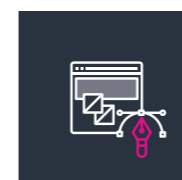
10. PERSONALIZE AT SCALE

With headless you can more easily integrate automated functionality that offers contextual and personalized content, products, search results, etc, all using the likes of real-time data, artificial intelligence and machine learning to deliver bespoke experiences and make data-driven decisions.



11. MORE STREAMLINED WORKFLOWS

With the right setup and tools, both technical and business teams can work in parallel. There's less reliance on each other, ultimately meaning fewer bottlenecks.



12. CREATE WITHOUT RELYING ON CODE

With the right headless tools like a headless CMS, business users still have all the content creation tools they need like previewing and scheduling functionality, but without the reliance on developers to code everything.

Real-World Examples of Headless Success

See How It's Working for Others

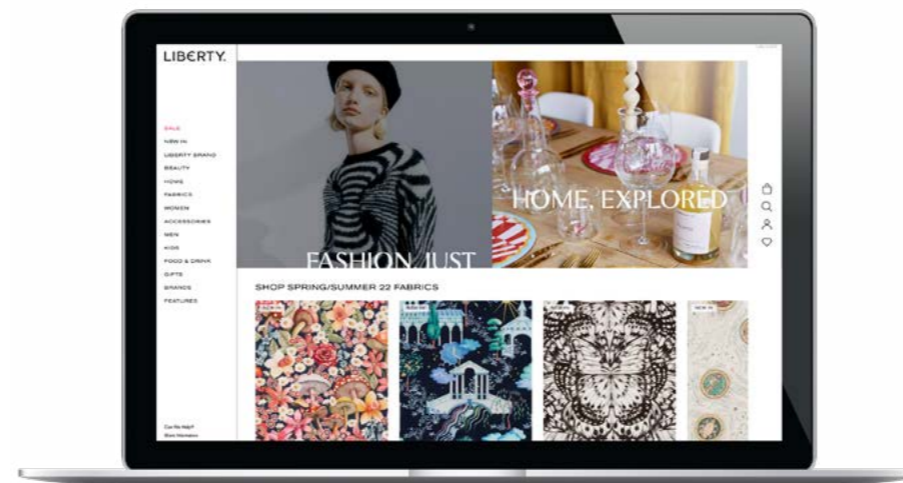
NATURA & CO

- Moved to Salesforce for flexible and scalable headless commerce
- Built an API-led live shopping app in three weeks
- 100% increase in conversion rate during live shopping event



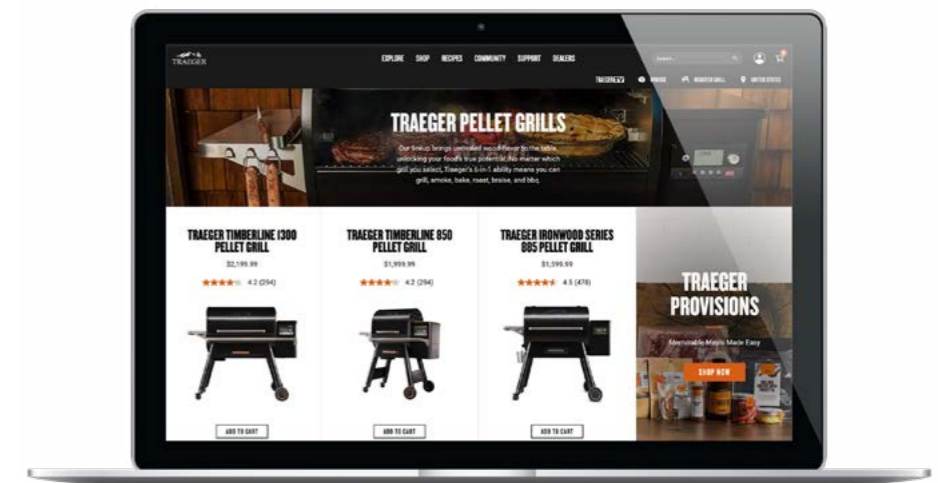
MULTIBILLION DOLLAR UK DEPARTMENT STORE

- Moved from monolith to headless
- 8x more deployments per year
- Boosted revenue faster
- No longer had change freezes during holiday periods



LIBERTY LONDON

- Integrated Ampliance headless CMS with Salesforce Commerce Cloud
- 66% reduction in content production time
- Asset management streamlining led to major boost in SEO and mobile traffic
- Acceleration of conversion growth especially in overseas markets



TRAER GRILLS

- Moved to headless for commerce experiences
- Site loads +2x faster
- Site conversion increase
- Daily web releases instead of quarterly

Which Headless Approach Is Right for Your Business?

Don't Expect One Size to Fit All

"Headless done right is wonderful. Headless done wrong is catastrophic."
-Pete Youell, VP of Technology at Astound Commerce.

Going headless doesn't mean guaranteed success, nor will you necessarily see an immediate return on investment. As a business that's something you need to make happen for yourselves, and of course it will be relative to what your success measures are to start with.

Too many go into it without the proper understanding of the migration. Without fully knowing why they're migrating, how it will affect the business, the costs involved or how they can realize true value. Needless to say, they come unstuck.

A big part of ensuring the success of headless is understanding what level of headless is going to suit your business.

Full Headless Vs a Selection of Headless Components

The beauty of a headless approach is that you don't have to go all in. You can, of course, if that's the right thing for your business. But you can also pick and choose certain components within your architecture and just go headless with them individually. What level of headless you choose needs to be assessed against your business and technical needs, as well as your business goals. You can then decide the right technology to support those needs.

You'll also need to understand the appetite for change within the business and whether the technical teams (both internally or externally) have the skills required to deal with a full headless architecture. Everything has to be achievable and realistic. But remember that the benefit of going headless is you can take it all step by step. You can bite off smaller bits of your architecture (and see the value of those) while on your way to a fully headless stack. Quite often old and new platforms will run in parallel as you work towards your headless implementation.

Salesforce Commerce Cloud is unique in that it offers both a headless and commerce-led solution. This means you don't have to run two different platforms in parallel as you transition to headless. You can take an incremental approach by rolling out headless in one region, one touchpoint, or even just one part of the experience. This allows you to pick one area of the experience that is performing poorly and improve that immediately. For example, if your top of funnel performance wasn't optimal and bounce rates were high, you could roll out a headless Progressive Web App from the homepage to checkout and keep the checkout on the storefront reference templates.

Another great example (if you don't want to replatform your entire commerce solution) would be to look at integrating a headless CMS like Amplience with your current ecommerce stack.

Your business users – the ones creating and managing content – will then be more empowered to deal with complex content needs across multiple frontends. They'll have the tools they need, while developer bottlenecks will likely be eliminated. The content production workflow will also be more streamlined as you'll remove the need for a lot of coding and frontend developer input. A headless CMS will also enable your teams to use the content more easily in other ways – through Salesforce Marketing Cloud for emails, for example, or to native applications.

6 Common Misconceptions About Adopting Headless

Don't Expect It to Be Easy

1 "IT WILL SAVE LOADS OF MONEY"

Yes, a well-executed headless strategy can help you save costs. But if that is your key success measure and the only thing you're trying to achieve, there may be better options out there. What headless does allow for is for you to have more flexibility and control over all your costs. Moving to having a multitude of vendors means you have oversight over all the individual costs instead of everything being wrapped up into one big platform cost. The upside also being you're never paying for any tools or functionality you don't want or need.

What you don't want to do is underestimate the investment headless will require in terms of both cost and effort, nor underestimate the operational and ownership aspects of a headless architecture.

If you don't scope and map it out properly, by the time you get well into your migration, things will become a lot bigger than you initially planned for, especially if you didn't properly understand all the operations and processes you will own that previously lived inside your traditional platform. Seemingly 'little' things like frontend hosting costs, for example, are easily forgotten about but can run up large fees.

2 "IT WILL BE EASIER AND QUICKER TO IMPLEMENT"

A headless architecture is definitely more complex than your traditional platform. You are controlling more moving parts and more integrations between all the vendors.

But as the headless approach becomes more popular, a lot of that initial complexity is getting reduced. Vendors and system integrators can be worth their weight in gold in helping to navigate all of it (and alleviate a lot of it too).

And in terms of getting to market quicker, a full headless approach will take time. But given the nature of headless allowing you to go live with a small part of your architecture first and iterating from there, you can also go to market within months, seeing value relatively quickly as a result.

In essence, your mileage may vary when it comes down to the initial implementation time as it will vary depending on the scope of your launch. Post initial implementation the pace of iteration on the experiences you afford your customers and your back-office system optimizations should be drastically improved.

3 "IT'S A MAGIC BULLET FOR BETTER PERFORMANCE"

You can deliver better performance with a headless architecture. But going headless alone does not guarantee it will happen. It still needs someone with a magnifying glass to go through each layer and make sure there are no bottlenecks.

What you do get with headless, however, is the ability to choose better frontend technologies and tools to achieve better performance metrics. You can also move previously weighty third-party tags and deliver the likes of A/B testing and personalization at an API level, mitigating some of those bulky bits that were previously hurting your performance.

4

“IT’S TOO HARD TO MANAGE MULTIPLE PLATFORMS AND TOOLS”

Managing more platforms and vendors can be difficult. But as you investigate headless, the key thing to look at is what is manageable for your team. Teams that embark on big headless migrations will need a level of digital maturity (or to draw on external resources) in order to not only do the initial migration but keep everything going. It’s about ensuring you have the skills and resources available to manage all the parts. If so, then you can mitigate a lot of the pain points surrounding it.

As well, headless vendors and system integrators are also working with each other and can help a lot with some of the complexity. What can sometimes feel like a lot of moving parts can be streamlined given the familiarity a lot of vendors have with each other.

5

“I CAN RUN MY BUSINESS AS-IS WITH HEADLESS”

Headless is catching a lot of businesses off guard when it comes to not understanding the organizational and mindset shift needed to realize its full potential.

Simply going headless doesn’t mean all these benefits will magically appear and powerful digital experiences will be laid out in front of you. You’ll need to adapt your ways of working, your processes and probably your teams too.

Different skillsets will be needed, more cross-collaboration will be vital and overall, you’ll need a different approach to how you’re delivering updates and features. Change management across it all will also be crucial.

Tapestry, a global house of well-known brands Coach, Kate Spade New York and Stuart Weitzman, explained it as moving from a finished goods mindset to semi-finished, whereby you’re not handing off finished products but having to be comfortable with breaking everything down into components.

But that approach obviously requires everyone from creative to developers to content producers to be onboard as it affects how everything comes together and who is responsible for what.

6

“IT DOESN’T GIVE BUSINESS TEAMS THE TOOLS THEY NEED”

Separating the frontends and backends has caused some issues for business users. They feel they’ve lost the easy editing tools they were used to and ultimately lost control of the customer experience.

There are solutions that cater for this, however, allowing business users to take back control and create and manage content across all channels, with all the functionality they need.



What Should You Expect When Going Headless?

Expect What You Put Into It

When looking at a headless approach, it's clear there are some definitive benefits but that you as a business need to make those benefits happen.

You need to do your research. Ask questions, set out a detailed plan, get everyone on board and ultimately be prepared for what's ahead. Each business is different and unique and there is not a one-size-all approach or solution. Take the time to outline what you want to achieve, why you think this is the right approach for your business and what the roadmap will be for getting you there.

Want to discuss going headless further?

Get in touch with one of the expert teams at [Amplience](#), [Salesforce](#) or [Astound Commerce](#).



ABOUT AMPLIENCE

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.

<https://amplience.com>



ABOUT SALESFORCE

Commerce Cloud empowers brands to unlock customer experience agility and innovation with a flexible headless commerce solution. Built on the world's most trusted commerce platform, it includes high-scale commerce services, flexible Commerce APIs, developer efficiency tools, AI-powered personalization, a fully decoupled front-end, and a proven partner ecosystem. IT teams get a modern infrastructure to boost agility and productivity, while business users get innovation to drive growth. Accelerate your path to headless by minimizing cost and complexity with a trusted headless commerce solution that covers the entire customer journey.

<https://salesforce.com>



ABOUT ASTOUND COMMERCE

Astound Commerce is your mission-critical partner in digital commerce, maximizing the brand and business value of every consumer touchpoint. With a strong global presence, more than 20 years' experience, and a team of 1,500 deeply passionate experts in the areas of experience, design, demand, and technology, we've had the opportunity to partner with visionary brands such as L'Oréal, Boohoo, Halfords, FLOR, TOMS, and Crocs.

<https://astoundcommerce.com>

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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.

Experience
FREEDOM



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