

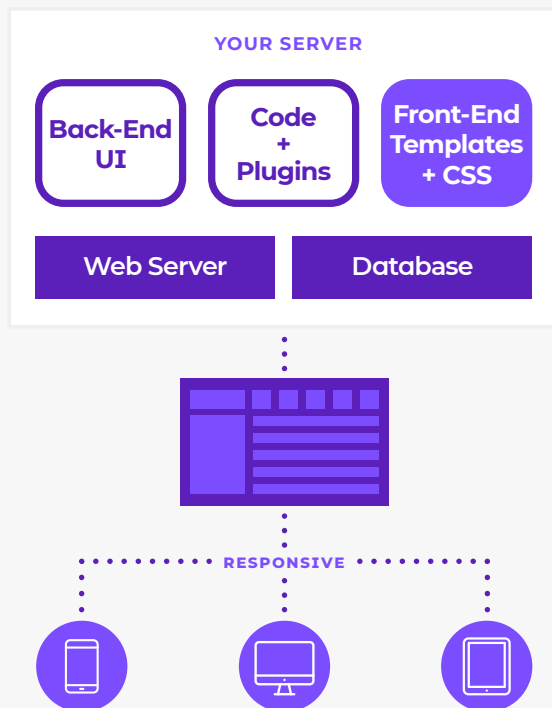
# Traditional vs. Headless CMS — Never Settle

Weigh the pros and cons and never settle.

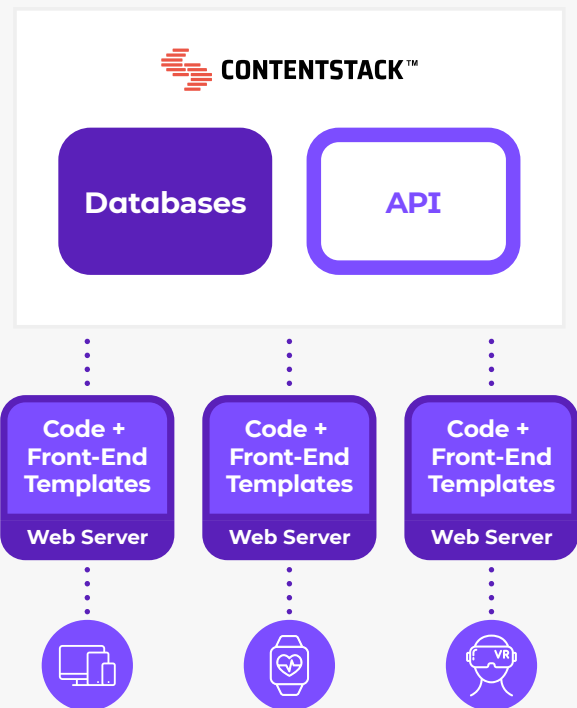
Your CMS is critical for creating an outstanding customer experience. But two camps have emerged — those who use a traditional CMS, such as WordPress and Drupal, and those who have adopted a headless CMS, which has gained a lot of popularity in the last few years.

To help you choose the right solution for your business, this article reviews the pros and cons of both a traditional CMS and a headless CMS. And we'll show you how a headless CMS, like Contentstack, enables you to increase productivity and create more amazing digital experiences faster.

## TRADITIONAL



## HEADLESS



# Traditional CMS Pros



## Low Barrier to Entry

With some traditional CMS options, such as WordPress and Squarespace, the initial setup and implementation for a simple website or blog can be quite fast and easy. If you're a small shop without development resources, a traditional CMS can be a great solution.



## Templates, Templates, Templates

Consumer-friendly CMSs, such as WordPress, Squarespace, Weebly, or Wix, also tend to give you a library of website themes and templates. While customization beyond the template is usually limited, these resources can help you get your website up and running.



## All-In-One Solution and Support

Often, a traditional enterprise-level CMS, such as Adobe Experience Manager, has built-in (if simplistic) functions for tasks such as analytics, social media, and audience targeting. If you prefer a single platform over specialized tools, a traditional, one-stop-shop CMS fits the bill.

*Traditional CMS requires you to write separate content and code for each channel and device.*

# Traditional CMS Cons



## Difficult Enterprise Implementation

For enterprises, setting up a traditional in-house CMS, such as Adobe Experience Manager or Drupal, is time-consuming and costly. It can take months to complete the initial installation and customizations. You also need to budget time and money to train business users to use the system. Finally, disruptive product upgrades can send you back to square one.



## Predetermined Site Structure Limits Creativity

Since the frontend and backend are linked in a traditional CMS, the look of your site tends to be limited. No matter how much you customize, these sites often feel bland and generic. Although plugins can somewhat expand your options, maintenance quickly becomes complicated and time-consuming. Many businesses who switch to a headless CMS cite reasons such as expensive developer costs, inefficiencies, and scalability issues.



## Not Made for Omnichannel Delivery

Traditional CMS solutions were designed when there was only one channel – the web. Serving content across multiple channels (mobile is just one of them) requires you to write content and code to match each channel and device on which that content will appear. For instance, you won't be able to use the same material for a mobile phone app, smartwatch, and kiosk.



## Requires Developers to Learn CMS-Specific Language

Using a traditional in-house CMS, developers face the added obstacle of syncing their code with the CMS's architecture. No developer wants to be limited to a legacy CMS's decades-old framework. This slows down progress and makes customization more difficult. And with the content and coding in the same system, a change to one can disrupt the other. In some cases, even a simple text update can require a developer.

# Headless CMS Pros

## ✓ Freedom to Create Content Without Dependencies

The biggest benefits of a headless CMS are speed and flexibility. Having a frontend and backend that are not coupled allows content creators to freely create and edit content without needing to worry about the frontend presentation and delivery. A headless CMS lets content writers write and lets developers develop without getting in the way of each other.

## ✓ Cross-Platform Publishing Reduces Time-to-Market

Because content is not bound to any single frontend structure, a single piece of content can be reused and delivered via APIs for omnichannel delivery anywhere: mobile phones, smartwatches, AR/VR, even jumbotrons. This cross-platform support significantly decreases time to market.

*A headless CMS lets content writers write and lets developers develop.*

## ✓ Introducing a Microservices Architecture

A pure headless CMS like Contentstack works as a digital hub so you can integrate small independent services through APIs. This architecture lets you choose the best tool for the task at hand, and lets developers implement new solutions faster, while improving system stability and scalability. Meanwhile, marketers always have best-in-class marketing tools that give them an edge over competitors who are limited to whatever is “in the Adobe box.”

## ✓ More Resilience for Sites and Peace of Mind for Content Editors

Having a decoupled and separated architecture generally helps with performance and scalability because, if the backend has issues or needs maintenance, there’s no downtime for the live site and editors can continue working on content. Paired with appropriate caching (CDN), headless CMS sites tend to perform better even under exceptional load.

While **headless** and **decoupled** are both departures from the legacy approach to content management, they are not identical. **Decoupled** means that the back and frontend are connected through APIs (but there’s still a frontend).

**A headless CMS from Contentstack allows you to create whatever frontend you like.**

## ✓ Developers Can Use Their Programming Language of Choice

Developers love the freedom and agility of a headless CMS. Frontend and backend developers do not need to conform to a single programming language (as they would with a traditional CMS). Using APIs and data formats like JSON, both frontend and backend developers can use whatever framework they prefer.

*Developers love the freedom and agility of a headless CMS.*

## ✓ Provides an Extra Layer of Security

Because the CMS database isn’t accessible from the content publishing platform, using a headless CMS decreases the risk of DDoS attacks that could make your website inaccessible. This is a particularly compelling factor for any company with an online business component.

# Headless CMS Cons



## Requires a Developer

A headless CMS requires a developer to get the system up and running. It is not a good fit for a one-person shop or a company without access to technology talent.



## Preview Via Environments Instead of WYSIWYG In-Line Editors

Although what you see is never quite what you get, content editors have gotten used to previewing and editing content in these WYSIWYG editors. Many headless CMSs lack this feature, but not Contentstack, which offers multiple environments. This allows content editors to manage and see content in a staging environment or test environment before publishing to a live site.



## Integration Ecosystem is Still Maturing

The integration process is not plug-and-play; most are still evolving and require substantial effort to integrate more extensive services, such as marketing automation and personalization. The trade-off is that you can use best-of-breed solutions rather than be tied to a mediocre solution that is built into the system.

*Contentstack allows content editors to manage and see content in a staging environment or test environment **before publishing.***

Contentstack is designed to help customers access and implement best-of-breed solutions. The unique integration framework reduces the time and effort required to deploy these tools.

# Finally, a CMS Both Developers and Business Users Love



Contentstack is a powerful headless CMS solution tailored to the needs of both technical users and business users. Developers get all the tools, SDKs, and frameworks needed to benefit from the latest technology and build cool sites and apps. Business users are empowered to manage their content without waiting on IT or an agency. Publishing is as simple as filling out a web form (with permissions and safeguards built-in, of course). It's a winning CMS with intuitive self-service and quality control that gets more done faster.



Contentstack is the pioneer of headless CMS that allows organizations to manage content across digital channels and create amazing digital experiences. Learn how marquee brands like Best Buy, Chase, Holiday Inn, Icelandair, Morningstar, Express, Miami HEAT, and Shell use Contentstack to tell their digital stories at [www.contentstack.com](http://www.contentstack.com).

49 Geary Street, Suite 238  
San Francisco, CA 94108

[info@contentstack.com](mailto:info@contentstack.com)  
+1 415 255 5955

[www.contentstack.com](http://www.contentstack.com)

[@contentstack](#)

