Riding the fast and furious flow of content.

A guide to staying afloat in the rush to keep up.
In 1983, high spring temperatures quickly melted a record snowpack in the Rockies, causing torrents of water to come roaring down into the Colorado River Basin and the Glen Canyon Dam. Fearing the largest dam failure in history, engineers frantically worked to stabilize it. They released huge amounts of water into the Colorado River below and closed it to rafting. But one night, a group of legendary river guides secretly launched a hand-built wooden dory—the Emerald Mile—into the raging river. Using the torrential dam output like a “hydraulic slingshot,” they rode the ferocious white water to set an all-time speed record for the 277-mile journey.
Navigating the wild ride of producing content today can result in the same kind of rush. It’s a fast-paced, non-stop, and challenging endeavor. You have to manage the flow of content. Keep your workflow moving at ever-increasing rates. Watch out for the perils of too much or too little personalization. And map your experiences to what your customers want.

You can’t just launch your content out there and hope for the best. You need a comprehensive content management system to control it, personalize it, and ride it to success.

The floodgates have opened.

The amount of content being delivered every 60 seconds is staggering. Here’s just a small sampling, according to Martech: 500 hours of video, 3.3 million Facebook posts, and almost 150,000 emails. And the numbers are growing every day.
An eMarketer report estimates that 9 out of 10 B2B companies in the U.S. are now using digital content marketing. It’s little wonder—that’s where their audiences are.

But Eric Stender, vice president of marketing at nonprofit fundraising platform Classy, cautions that it’s not just about creating content and distributing it. Cited by eMarketer, he said, “It’s about managing all the complex moving parts of a content engine and then working together to elevate all of that work.”

And that requires a complete and integrated digital foundation.

Whether you start from the ground up or retool an existing system, a comprehensive content management system (CMS) will allow you to create and deliver more personalized and relevant brand experiences. It will also help you drive demand across channels. Better understand your existing customers while discovering new ones. And increase your ROI, brand consistency, and loyal customers.

We’ve compiled a list of best practices to help you build the right foundation. You don’t have to do them all right away. The key is to focus on the areas where you can improve immediately and continue from there as you navigate the rapids of content delivery.
1. **Move faster with IT and marketers pulling together.**

You’ve undoubtedly been in this situation before—your marketing team needs to publish new content immediately. They scramble to pull it all together, but they often end up stuck in a whirling eddy, waiting for IT to write the code and get it live.

That just won’t cut it today. Marketing has to be more nimble—with the tools to drive content creation, update it, and launch it themselves. Yet they can’t leave IT completely out of the picture. The two departments must still work together—but in a more productive way.

One solution is a hybrid content management system. This supports content delivery on traditional channels like web and mobile, as well as emerging channels like IoT and single-page applications (SPAs) via headless delivery. A hybrid CMS with a single-page application editor allows front-end developers to innovate and continue building SPAs with the tools they prefer, while allowing marketers and other business users to preview and edit that content—even pulling in analytics to measure its effectiveness.

“Ultimately, the hybrid CMS will displace the traditional CMS in the enterprise.”

MELISSA WEBSTER, VICE PRESIDENT OF CONTENT AND DIGITAL MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES, IDC
2. Keep your customers from falling off.

While a river takes the path of least resistance, your customers often don’t. They sometimes double back, head off in different directions, and even camp out for a while in one channel. The key is to keep them with you, no matter how choppy their journey is.

Unified customer profiles can help. By collecting information from all the places customers interact with you—like email, web, mobile, apps, CMS, and in-store—you can create a centralized profile for a 360-degree view. This allows you to recognize them wherever they are. And to create content that’s consistent and personal throughout their journey, so you lose fewer along the way.

How to create a more unified customer profile.

• Identify what your customers do. Gather every bit of data they leave behind as they interact with your brand.

• Determine who they are. Integrate all of your data sources to create a single profile, accessible across all channels and to all those managing the experiences.

• Discover how they found you. Analyze their behaviors such as where they came from and when they moved into another channel.
No matter how many twists and turns a river takes, it’s one continuous flow. That’s the goal for your brand experience too. “In this new world order, the brand is equal to the sum of its experiences. When we deliver seamless, spot-on moments, they roll up to be experiences and, ultimately, they inform the perception of and affinity for our brand,” says Kevin Lindsay, director of product marketing for Adobe Experience Manager Assets at Adobe.

You can’t tell one story on your website and another one in emails. You have to connect all of your marketing touches with the same brand continuity—from your web pages to apps to in-store screens—so each touchpoint becomes an extension of the same conversation.

This kind of brand consistency builds trust, confidence, and loyalty. On the flip side, inconsistent experiences can quickly erode what took years to build up.

Up to 66% of North American companies say consistent messaging will be very important over the next five years.

Source: Econsultancy
4. Be prepared for the confluence of new channels.

Different channels are constantly finding their way into the customer journey. And customers are engaging with a lot of them throughout the purchase process. According to the 2018 Adobe Consumer Content Survey, consumers might visit 10 channels when researching a purchase—and another 6 while purchasing. Some of these include a brand’s website, mobile app, peer reviews, online marketplaces, and home assistants.
Consumers engage on multiple channels throughout the purchase process.

### Channels used when researching a purchase.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand’s website</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking out the product in-store</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviews from family and peers</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social networking sites</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video channels</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online blogs, forums, news</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand’s mobile app</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emails from a brand</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital displays in a store</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand’s online chat</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Channels used when making a purchase.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online marketplace</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-store</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand’s website</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand’s mobile app</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over the phone</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart speakers/Home assistants</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Adobe*
This means you have to think about omnichannel experiences in all you do. Specifically, about designing for people’s lives and how they consume content—not just making your content fit multiple screens.

“Yes, you have to make your content responsive. And you have to think mobile. But today it’s really all about omnichannel,” says Shelby Britton, Adobe group product marketing manager. “You have to be prepared for emerging channels—the ones coming online, and the ones we don’t even know about yet, so you can future-proof your solutions.”

The good news is that marketers are no longer so dependent on developers to deliver content to multiple channels. Using content fragments and experience fragments, marketers can create and edit content that can be used on any channel—then hand it off to the developers to deliver. When someone updates a fragment, it will be updated everywhere—all at once—increasing consistency and content velocity.
5. Go deeper in your personalization.

Content is only valuable if it’s relevant and personal. A 2018 Accenture study reports that 91 percent of consumers are more likely to shop with brands that recognize, remember, and provide relevant offers and recommendations. But 27 percent also reported a brand experience being too personal or invasive. So marketers have a fine line to walk.

According to eMarketer, the top priority (50.3 percent) for marketing professionals across North America in 2018 was intensifying the depth of their personalization efforts. But A/B testing a few pieces of content against a broad audience isn’t enough. The bar is now set to get much more granular in your testing and to understand what a customer wants at different times along the journey.

Today’s most successful brands are investing in AI and automated processes such as predictive analytics and predictive marketing. They’re using customer information to predict future behaviors, guide what their customers’ experiences should look like, and deliver more personalized content—all with very little effort. With a press of a button, they can deliver more compelling experiences with lightning speed and better results—doing what used to take a data scientist days, if not months, to do.
6. Let a modern workflow carry you to success.

Marketers are releasing more content than ever. But like the water levels of 1983, the demand continues to rise. A recent Adobe survey found that 74 percent of creatives say they’re generating more or significantly more content than five years ago. But it still isn’t enough.

There’s simply no time for the logjams created by today’s current workflows—the hours spent tracking down the right content, editing it for each and every channel, then handing it off to IT to code and deliver.

The solution is a modern workflow.

Picture this: to create new content, a designer goes to a centralized content repository and gets the channel-agnostic components and content fragments she needs for websites, mobile apps, IoT devices, and more. Then with a few keystrokes, they deliver it without all the manual programming. This solution gives marketers the flexibility to keep the content flowing, allows your developers to use custom components and SPAs, and keeps your customers coming back for more.

This kind of agility helped Silicon Labs see a 15 percent conversion lift with improved digital experiences. With their new CMS, their marketing team can now quickly create, manage, and deliver relevant content.

“What used to take us a week can now happen in 20 minutes,” says Kamran Shah, director of corporate marketing Silicon Labs. “We have the control to make changes when the market demands, allowing us to be much more agile as a team.”
7. Use analytics to steer you in the right direction.

To create experiences that resonate deeply with your customers, you need to know what’s happening with your content and how your key metrics are performing. There are multiple ways to gauge this:

- **Usage metrics.** Measures how customers interact with content across multiple devices, as well as which content achieves the most impressions or downloads—giving an indication of topic popularity.

- **Engagement metrics.** Measures the percentage of content consumed, completion rates, and page depth, as well as the behavioral aspects such as where the mouse hovers on the page.

- **Value metrics.** Measures shares, likes, and comments for an understanding of how they feel about your content. You’ll also want to track attribution and ROI for a better picture of how your content supports your business.

But simple reporting isn’t enough. You also need the ability to look deeper with diagnostic tools that identify anomalies that are statistically significant. For example, let’s say you have a big dip in conversion. A content management system with AI and machine learning will automatically surface that information and determine if it’s an anomaly. If it was, it will get as granular as, say, determining that the drop-off was new visitors from California on a mobile device.
Now that you’ve honed in on this very specific audience, you can use those insights to create a new audience segment and deliver more relevant experiences. All within your content management system.

While a little wooden dory carried three slightly crazy river guides over treacherous rapids and on to fame in just under 37 hours, your journey will undoubtedly take more time.

And that’s okay. Implementing a comprehensive content management system doesn’t have to happen overnight. You can begin by reviewing what you’re doing now against the best practices we’ve outlined here. Depending on your business, you may see obvious places to start. Focusing on a few key areas now can get you by for the short term. But you also need to consider making some holistic moves by investing in solutions that propel you forward in many of these areas at once.

With the right foundation in place, you can create your own exciting ride through today’s world of high-volume, fast-flowing content. And bring your customers along for a really great experience.
Adobe can help.

“Using Adobe Analytics, Adobe Target, and Adobe Experience Manager together, we're developing a modern website experience to reach customers. The integrations allow us to work quickly and efficiently for a go-to-market approach that is boosting traffic and conversions.”

TIM DENNEY, DIRECTOR OF WEB DEVELOPMENT, DUN & BRADSTREET

Adobe Experience Manager gives you the tools to create and release a continuous stream of content that flows across all channels and devices to reach your customers with a consistent, engaging, and personal experience.

Adobe Experience Manager Sites provides a powerful foundation to create and deliver content at high velocity. Adobe Target and Adobe Analytics make it easier than ever to identify and segment your audiences, dig deeper into their actions and preferences, and predict their next move. And Adobe Sensei provides the artificial intelligence you need to automate tedious tasks, so you have time for more creative initiatives.
Sources


