

HEADLESS COMMERCE: THE BASICS.

THIS IS HEADLESS COMMERCE. THE BASICS.

The stuff you should know when
you're thinking about going headless.

THE ORIGINS OF HEADLESS COMMERCE.

(JUST A BIT OF CONTEXT TO WHERE IT ALL BEGAN.)

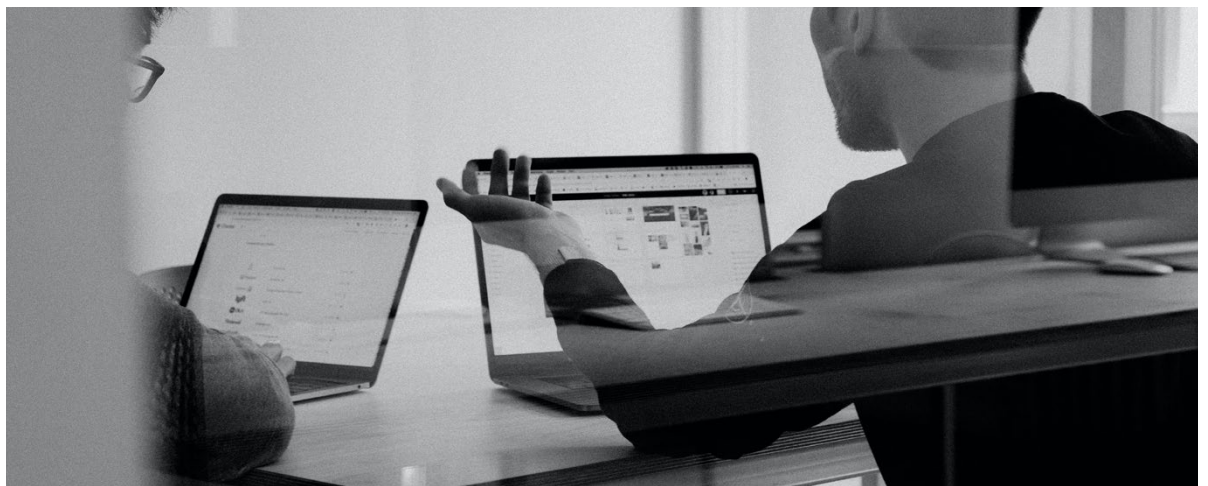
Before we get going, it's important to understand where the rise in headless technology has stemmed from.

Well, in today's world, digital channels reign supreme. The rise in mobile, social and content have drastically changed commerce, and changed how consumers well, consume everything there is about your brand, products and services.

There's an insatiable appetite for content. There is a need for speed, for consistency, for personalization. There is an expectation for brands to be accessible everywhere, and through any device.

Businesses have to adapt. Side-step traditional platforms and relook at how they conceive, design and deliver content and commerce at scale. It's about storytelling, about delivering digital experiences for a digital world.

It's no easy feat. Cue the need for a paradigm shift in how we think about, create and deploy solutions. That shift is headless commerce.



HEADLESS COMMERCE SUMMED UP.

(TRYING TO GET RID OF ALL THE TECHNICAL JARGON.)

It's important to know what headless commerce actually means. We'll try to keep it brief.

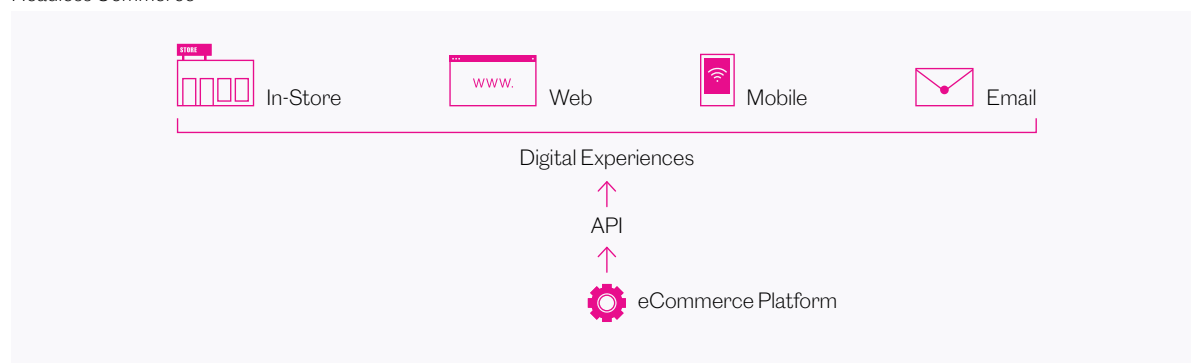
The term 'headless' means that the frontend is de-coupled from the backend (i.e. the head is literally not there), which also means that the backend makes no assumptions about the kinds of customer experience it will be used to deliver, at all. Headless systems present content and functionality as APIs. This makes them more flexible by being capable of supporting many different customer experiences from a single system. So with headless, ironically, you can have many heads. Confused yet?

The frontend (head), can be anything that presents information to the customer – think web storefront, mobile app, in-store kiosk. The backend (body) is the content and commerce functionality powering the “heads”.

What's important to note is that the frontend and backend function completely separate of each other. This separation sounds like a problem, but really it isn't. It's the key to the flexibility and agility that 'headless' approaches enable. By way of comparison, in a monolithic platform everything comes connected together (tightly coupled), which means changing the backend also means changing the frontend – which is time consuming and complex!

With headless systems, frontend's can be developed and managed independently of the backend. This leads to less complexity, more agility, and ultimately the freedom to innovate.

Headless Commerce



5 PAIN POINTS YOU'RE PROBABLY EXPERIENCING.

(HENCE WHY YOU'RE EXPLORING HEADLESS.)

If you're looking at new technology and new approaches to digital commerce, then you're probably feeling a fair bit of pressure. It could be external pressure given the rapidly changing eCommerce landscape, or internal, with rigid systems hamstringing your ability to adapt and keep up. Quite often it's both.

Here's some telltale signs that you've likely outgrown your current legacy systems and change is needed.

1

YOU LACK CONTROL OF YOUR CUSTOMER AND BRAND EXPERIENCES.

There are so many ways to interact and communicate with customers. Your website, app, social, email, in-store, IoT, it's endless. With it has come the need to present your brand consistently across all touchpoints. Customers expect it. They want a unified and seamless experience wherever they find you and whichever channel they purchase through.

The problem is, you're stuck trying to build the experience for each individual channel. There's no consistency. There's no overall, overarching control with your current technology stack. Importantly, with this lack of control over your digital experiences comes a limited ability for you to differentiate yourself from your competitors.

2

YOU HAVE POOR INTERNAL WORKFLOWS.

Too much to do, too little time. It's the old adage but it rings true more than ever. With eCommerce growth and an increase in content production, internal workflows and processes need to be as efficient as possible.

No surprises here then if your workflows are being bottlenecked at certain team members, with others spending too much time duplicating content and changes across different systems. Manual effort is high. Productivity is low. Getting anything produced and live is simply taking too long.



3

YOUR SITE PERFORMANCE IS LESS THAN DESIRABLE.

Customers don't wait around. And anything less than perfect when interacting with your brand is a barrier to them buying. They don't want frustrations. They just want things to do what they want, easily.

That's why your site performance is so crucial. If your frontend speed is too slow for example, not only will it be contributing to lower conversion rates and lost sales but also poor SEO (Google loves things working fast too). If you're unable to scale with demand, if high traffic volumes like the holiday period end in more downtime, then your potential customers are likely heading elsewhere.

4

SPEED TO MARKET IS SLOW, CHANGE IS HARD.

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 UX changes and ideas that you need to implement. You're deploying way less frequently than you need. You can't run as many experiments as you want. All these things are causing you headaches, and leaving you languishing behind your competitors.

5

YOU CAN'T HARNESS ALL THE THIRD-PARTY POWER AND DATA.

There are so many commerce solutions out there that are bringing their A-game. In search, in payments, in analytics, in content management. And they're all sitting within an eco-system ready to be utilized.

But you're restricted to the plugins your platform allows. You can't currently execute any contextualization and personalization. It means you can't truly harness the power of the data you already have sitting there. It means you're confined to the rigid and slow templates you're afforded.



5 BENEFITS YOU'LL REALIZE FROM GOING HEADLESS.

(IT'S ALL THE FRUSTRATIONS ABOVE, FIXED.)

There are probably not too many businesses at the moment that aren't ticking some, if not all, of the boxes above if they're stuck using monolithic, traditional technology.

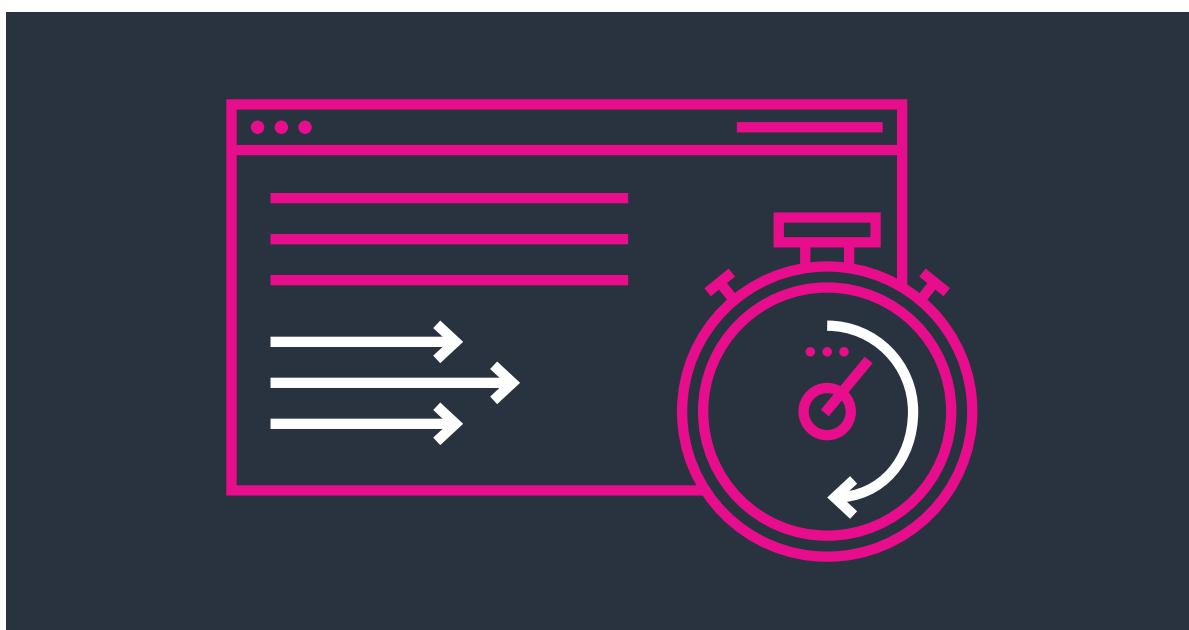
But change is hard. We get it. Take a look at the benefits below though, they're pretty compelling.

1

BE FAST. REAL FAST.

Headless means speed. In so many ways.

A headless approach means you can confidently make changes and push releases live much faster than ever before. You can optimize and innovate as much as you wish, reacting to the market as you need. It's all done through a shift to constant iteration instead of reverting to long sprints or waterfall methods. It's taking the go-live time down from weeks or months to hours in some cases.



Implementing headless commerce also affords you speed in the time it takes you to realize value. Due to the nature of the decoupled environment, you can start your migration by taking it one piece at a time. You don't need to completely rip out the old tech and start from scratch.

We think Tim Jacobs, Head of Digital Solutions at fashion powerhouse Misguided, summed it up nicely when discussing their move to a headless approach: "Give us a team, give us 3 months and we'll prove value. Then give us 3 more months and we'll keep proving it."

It's small steps to big change, where you can see value bit by bit.

Lastly, you can realize the power of headless in the speed of your frontends. Your customers will appreciate the sub-second load times, even at peak traffic, so expect improved SEO, increased customer satisfaction and conversion. Now more than ever, site speed is paramount, with search engines now measuring your websites customer experience and factoring these scores into their search algorithms.

| 2

EXPERIENCE ABSOLUTE FREEDOM.

Freedom. Sounds bliss. By separating your front and backends, you'll be able to do whatever you want with your architecture, bringing in the tools and solutions you actually want. You'll get to leverage other vendors that are delivering best-of-breed solutions instead of trying to recreate everything yourself or only being able to integrate with the tools your legacy platform lets you work with. Everything from AI-powered search to communication tools, a world of third-party integrations is at your fingertips. Just pick what you want. Best still, as and when you need simply update or change any tools individually. There's no interference with the backend, so the whole process is made a lot easier.

All of this means the developers will be happy. But what about the business users? Well, we won't lie to you, separating the frontend and the backend has presented some issues for business users, whereby they can lose control of the customer experience. But with the right solutions, this can be mitigated. With the right tools, business users can be creating, previewing, scheduling and publishing content at will. (And they won't have to do any of it in code either.)

Best yet, developers and business users can work in parallel, moving at their own pace and not relying on each other to make changes. There are fewer bottlenecks. It's a win for both teams.



3

ACTUAL SCALABILITY AND AGILITY.

Given a headless approach utilizes a lot of different solutions that aren't tied to each other, you can scale each component individually, and extend it as needed too. Also, peak periods, no problem. With your frontend and backend working independently of each other you can scale easily without it affecting response times. It's the confidence you need in knowing your systems aren't going to crack at any signs of pressure or load.

A headless approach also gives the ability to move and react how you need. With more agility you can experiment more often, and freely. Your frontend experiments won't need any modifications to backend code, as it would in traditional platforms, and overall, this agile approach means you can learn quickly, react even quicker again, and look to continuously build and improve.

4

GAIN COMPLETE CONTROL OVER YOUR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES.

Although it's headless, you can have as many "heads" as you like, meaning you can have multiple frontends, be it social channels, mobile apps, kiosks. You can add or remove them quickly, and it adds no more complexity, as they just draw on the underlying APIs.

Having all these frontends utilizing best-of-breed tools and features, and the right, powerful data, means you can deliver more engaging digital experiences for your customers, however they interact with you. The experience across different touchpoints is seamless, giving customers a greater sense of your brand and affording them the chance to easily convert however they choose to shop.

5

CUSTOMIZE WHAT YOU WANT. PERSONALIZE WHAT YOU WANT.

Stop being handcuffed to prescribed templates and structures that weren't actually designed for your business. Because no one wants that. Instead, going headless will allow you to set up your frontend how you want, and fully implement the UX and design principles that guide your online brand presence.

Key to conversion, headless commerce also gives you more options when it comes to incorporating personalization. Forget being generic. Easily add in functionality that delivers contextual and personalized content, products, search results, you name it, wherever you want it. Make data driven decisions to create tailored customer experiences. It will drive growth and your bottom line.



5 THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN MAKING THE MOVE.

(BUT LEAVING THE REAL DETAIL FOR LATER.)

Making the move to any new platform let alone reorchestrating your entire architecture can require a lot of moving parts. Just for starters you'll need buy-in from the business and a defined strategy. It can be a lot.

So, without going into too much detail, because we could be here a while, here's a few considerations for when making the move.

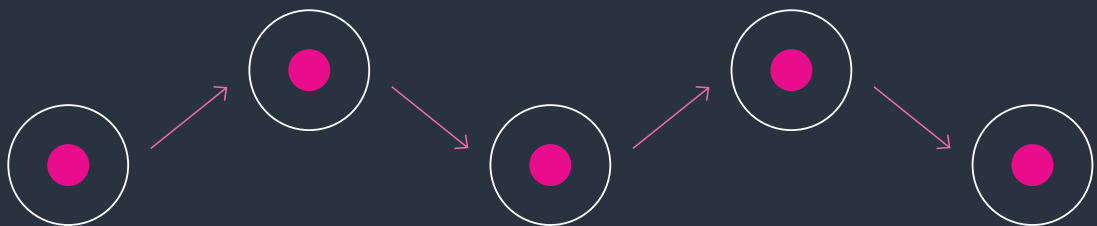
1

GET PLANNING.

Planning is everything. Having a definite roadmap for how you go about the move will be crucial.

Some of the things you will need to decide upon is how you will go about the migration. 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. A phased approach is recommended as there's less risk to mitigate but it's up to you. It's just a case of understanding your business, it's problems and challenges and knowing what's right. Where will you see value the most? You tell us.



2

LOOK AT HOW IT WILL AFFECT YOUR BUSINESS INTERNALLY.

No change comes without any knock-on effects. Good or bad, make sure you understand how going headless will affect your entire business, and not just the development team. What features and tooling are a must for your business users for example?

As well, with the move to headless comes a look at how you might need to organize yourselves internally, how you might need to rethink how you're approaching products and developments. It's team structure but also mindset. For example, ask yourself, how will you marry modern headless tools and services with agile best practices in order to drive cross-functional team collaboration? Those little barriers likely standing between your development and marketing teams, they need to come down. The two need to be working together to deliver experiences.

3

DO YOUR RESEARCH.

Do your homework. Know what solutions you need and what is going to bring value to the business. It might not be about going for the "best" option on the market but actually analyzing vendors more intimately to see whether they really work for your needs. Holden Bale, GVP at Huge, put it well by saying, "To me the term best-of-breed is incredibly destructive as a term... The goal is to have an architecture that is best-of-need."

Obviously, there are a lot of solutions you might need to research. But when you get to headless content management systems, then we have a handy, unbiased buyer's guide that might be of use.

4

EXECUTION, EXECUTION, EXECUTION.

There's no time like the present. At some point all that planning needs to come into fruition and you need to actually implement. Thankfully with headless, this can come about pretty quickly, regardless of whether you're adopting a full replacement or an iterative approach to updating your aging legacy architecture. Both paths can be relatively quick to put into practice with a small team of experts.

5

KNOW WHAT HAPPENS AFTER GO-LIVE.

Life doesn't stop after go-live. You know that. So, what's next? Constant iteration and that shift in mindset we mentioned means you'll be working differently, 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.



WANT TO KNOW MORE?

(GO ON, GET IN TOUCH.)

Well, that's headless commerce broken down.

If you feel like headless commerce could be a viable option for your business, then the most obvious next step is to get in touch with the team at Amplience. We know headless pretty well, to say the least. We can even tell you if headless isn't for you.

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