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DXP 101:
From disjointed to seamless customer experiences

A beginner's guide to Digital Experience Platforms

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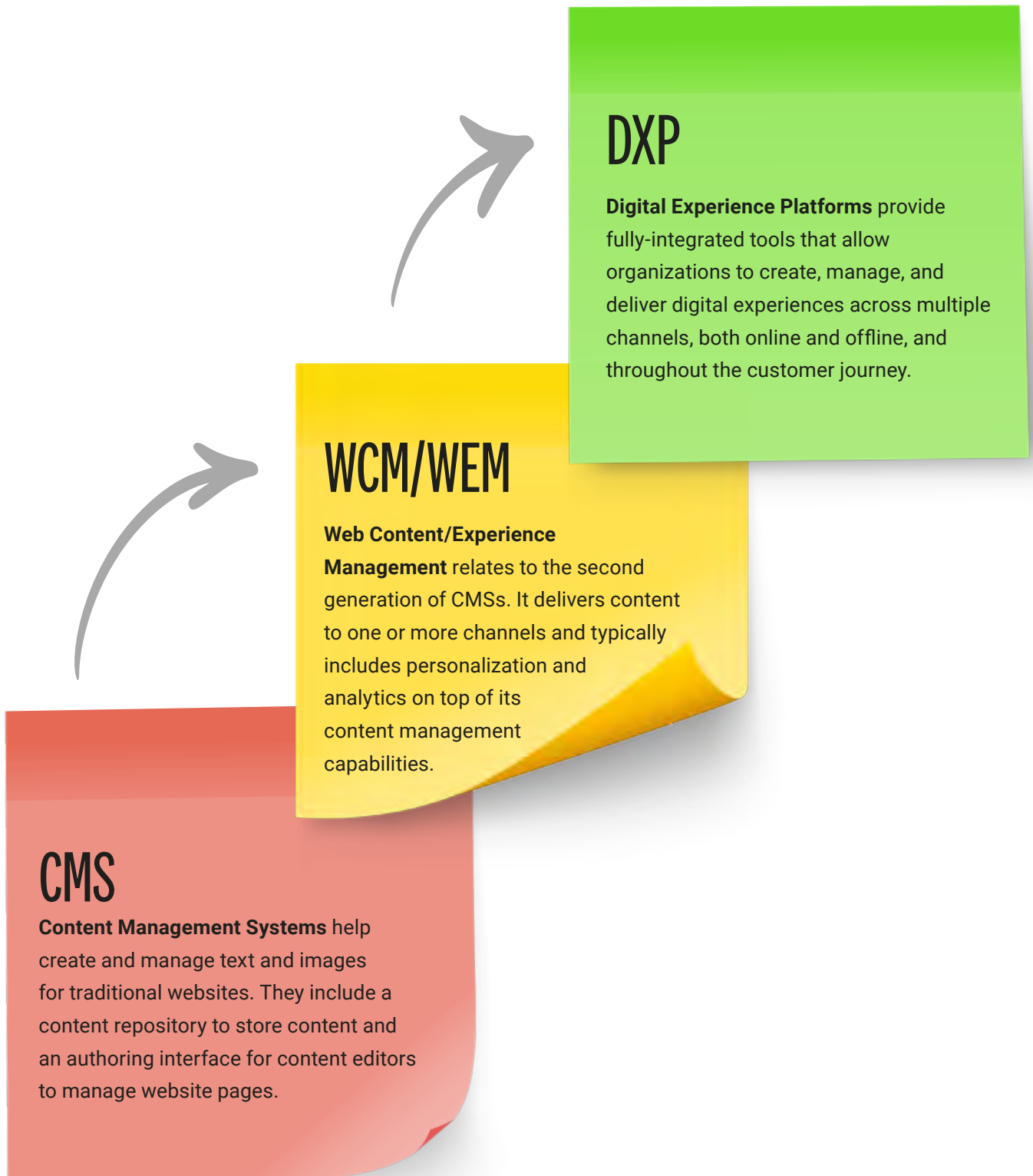## A beginner's guide to Digital Experience Platforms

The world is moving away from simple content management toward digital experience management. Market leaders and disruptors now go beyond creating and managing content to focusing on a more holistic customer experience. And businesses cannot afford to ignore this trend or risk falling behind their competitors.

The technology that was once adequate to create content no longer suffices to create the type of experiences needed to keep up with customer expectations. Led by analyst firms such as Gartner and Forrester, a new category of technology evolved, and the term 'Digital Experience Platform' (DXP) was born.

This ebook will help you make sense of the DXP and equip you with the knowledge you need to choose the right solution for your business.

The evolution CMS > WEM > DXP

DXP

Digital Experience Platforms provide fully-integrated tools that allow organizations to create, manage, and deliver digital experiences across multiple channels, both online and offline, and throughout the customer journey.

WCM/WEM

Web Content/Experience Management relates to the second generation of CMSs. It delivers content to one or more channels and typically includes personalization and analytics on top of its content management capabilities.

CMS

Content Management Systems help create and manage text and images for traditional websites. They include a content repository to store content and an authoring interface for content editors to manage website pages.

Content Management Systems (CMSs) = a thing of the past?

Tim Berners-Lee, a British scientist, invented the World Wide Web in 1989. And once it became a thing, Content Management Systems were introduced to help organizations create, manage, and deploy content for their website. Sounds like ancient history?

Yes, and back in the day, websites were simple, and so were the tools to manage them. Why? These early websites consisted of text, links, and sometimes images.

While CMSs still exist – typically as a component of a DXP – the term no longer does justice to the platforms that provide integrations to a whole ecosystem of DX technology to create engaging and personalized experiences that go far beyond what a website in the 1990s had to offer.

DXP explained

A digital experience platform (DXP) provides the tools that allow organizations to create, manage, and deliver digital experiences.

Digital experiences are interactions between a customer and a business or its services using digital technology. Examples of digital experiences include:

| Browsing a website | Shopping online | Talking to a smart assistant | Streaming media |

In enterprise organizations, several teams usually collaborate to create digital experiences. A DXP, therefore, offers different tools for different user types.

- **Content creators**, like marketers or editors, use a central visual interface.

- **Developers** get to use IDE integrations, low-code tools, or APIs.

> *A digital experience platform (DXP) is a well-integrated and cohesive set of technologies designed to enable the composition, management, delivery, and optimization of contextualized digital experiences across multiexperience customer journeys.*
>
> **Gartner.**

Making a case for a DXP

With so many technologies to 'help' create and optimize experiences, brands are at risk of building a disjointed technology stack that costs a fortune but doesn't actually deliver.

DXPs aim to solve this problem by unifying all DX tech in a single platform that enables businesses to create seamless customer experiences.

What can a DXP do for the business?

A. Create experiences for any touchpoint faster, AKA time to market

B. Maximize ROI across the entire DX ecosystem

C. Deliver on KPIs from Net Promoter Score (NPS) to Customer Lifetime Value (CLT) to revenue

D. All of the above

How can IT benefit from a DXP?

A. Empower business users to self-serve, so that devs can focus on dev

B. Work more efficiently and increase the release cadence

C. Improve overall system security, including identity and access management

D. All of the above

The composable DXP

A composable DXP is a specific kind of DXP that uses a modular architecture. That means that it is made up of individual software components that each contribute capabilities to create, manage, and deliver digital experiences.

A Content Management System (CMS) and content delivery are some of its core components. Other components include:

Customer Data	**Personalization**	**Analytics**
Search	**Commerce**	**Recommendations**

These individual software components are often referred to as best-of-breed technology because they solve a specific problem very well. Starting with only the required components and adding others over time allows you to control complexity and grow as you go.

To get individual components to work together as one, a DXP relies on integrations between them; think of it as a mesh or a network. This network connects the individual software components seamlessly, making them available in the platform rather than accessing each component separately.

GROW AS YOU GO :)

Composable DXP vs. suite DXP

The opposite of a composable DXP is a suite DXP that aims to provide an all-in-one solution.

Both approaches have pros and cons, the biggest difference being flexibility. While purchasing an all-in-one solution might seem simple, it certainly comes with limitations. A software suite includes a large set of capabilities that you might or might not need, and that might or might not do what you need them to do.

However, adding best-of-breed software components to a suite is often difficult or impossible. And using only capabilities within the suite makes it often hard to deliver new, innovative projects.

If you find it difficult to choose between buying a closed suite and building a complex DXP, consider a composable solution that allows you to grow as you go.

There are different difficulty levels when building a composable DXP, and you don't have to start at level 99 and fight a gigantic beast right away – or at all. You can start at level 1, and it is up to you how complex you want your DXP to become.

Why is composable architecture better?

1. Add and remove tech to/from the stack flexibly
2. Pay only for what you need
3. Say goodbye to vendor lock-in

What about headless?

A headless architecture separates—or decouples—the backend from the frontend. The frontend is the presentation layer that users directly interact with. It is the 'head' in 'headless'.

While traditional Content Management Systems provide their frontend, by definition, a headless CMS does not include the frontend. Instead, it acts primarily as a content repository making content available via APIs. Any frontend has to be built separately.

This architecture allows developers more flexibility and control over the experience. It also makes content reuse and the integration of microservices into the frontend easier.

On the other hand, it requires the additional effort to build the frontend.

Companies with large development teams or agency budgets can benefit from this approach without feeling restricted. Others might consider a hybrid-headless CMS instead, which would allow them to choose between a headless and a traditional approach on a project-by-project basis.

Another aspect to consider about headless is how content can be managed by non-technical users. A typical headless CMS only provides forms for adding and changing content. It lacks the visual control that most content authors expect from a CMS. This is often a deal-breaker for organizations that want to enable non-technical users to manage digital experiences self-sufficiently.

Enter the DXP. First, a DXP needs a repository to store content. Second, it can help solve the authoring challenge by providing the tools to visually edit the experience. Hence, the headless approach and the composable DXP go hand in hand.

What are the benefits of a headless CMS?

✅ Serve content to multiple frontends and channels

✅ Let frontend devs choose their tech

✅ Manage frontend and backend tech independently

What are the drawbacks of a headless CMS?

❌ Extra effort building frontend apps

❌ No visual editing capabilities out of the box

❌ Limited to headless or need another system

→ HYBRID-HEADLESS
→ DXP

5 steps to get started creating better digital experiences

1. **List your goals and KPIs** that relate directly or indirectly to digital experiences (DX).

2. **Create an overview of all DX systems** and services in your estate. Note if they are integrated or separate. List challenges with the status quo.

3. **Ideate** how you could overcome your challenges and achieve your goals. Collaborate with other stakeholders to get a better understanding of their needs and make a list of the required technical capabilities.

4. **Evaluate** your current tech stack. Which components would you want to keep? Which components are no longer fit for purpose and need to be replaced? Which components are missing?

5. **Highlight the impact** an ideal platform would have on your goals and KPIs.

Did you identify enough value to justify a conversation about how you are going to create digital experiences in future?

Please reach out to our team if you need guidance on steps 3., 4., or 5. We can help you work through your requirements and share examples and best practices.

CONTACT@ MAGNOLIA-CMS.COM
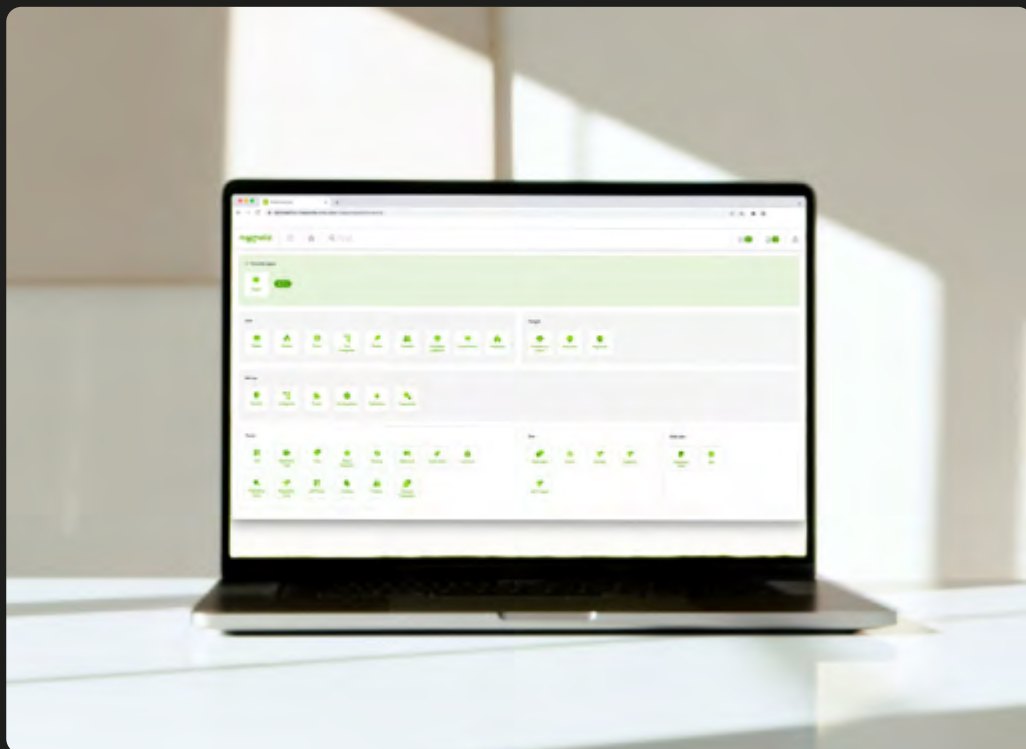
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