Digitalization in the education industry: Headless CMS as a key component

INTRODUCTION

The education service market is constantly evolving as digital presence becomes a top priority for all sectors. There has been a significant increase in demand for online learning options in recent years, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, when all brick-and-mortar establishments were forced to quickly adapt to a new reality. Public and private schools, universities, colleges, and other educational institutions were required not only to provide students with learning materials, but also to train personnel to manage all processes online.

> " According to Statista, revenue in the education industry is expected to grow at a 7.75% annual rate, with a predicted market volume of US$10.04 billion by 2026."

Another factor that influences the education market is the audience. As Generation Z enters the classroom, their expectations of the learning process differ significantly from those of previous generations. Born and raised with technology at their fingertips, these young people are used to acquiring information and communicating online, and the educational process is no exception. They emphasize the user experience (UX) and interactive formats that make studying more proactive and involve them in learning.

In order to match the audience's expectations and grow their business, educational institutions need to implement the latest technology into their architecture. Building a simple website listing all the programs is not enough anymore, as the website is now not only a "face" of the organization, but rather an immersive educational platform where the studying process happens.

This whitepaper dives into the education industry's online challenges and how a modern content management system (CMS) can help overcome them.

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Key challenges for the education sector and how to address them

Just like any other organizations, educational institutions have financial goals to operate and develop. In this section, we will cover key aspects that affect achieving them and explore how to fix that.

INCREASE STUDENT FIRST ENGAGEMENT BY X%

Previously, colleges and universities relied heavily on their reputation, and it was common for parents to make major decisions about their children's education and career paths. Now, the situation is completely different. Young people are participating much more in building plans for the future, and selecting an education path is also on their shoulders.

Meanwhile, there has been a significant shift in how students-to-be determine which university or college to enter. Zoomers tend to choose education based on the career they want to get after graduation. Not only does it influence their choice of major, but it also affects which individual classes they enroll in.

One way educational institutions can provide an engaging experience is to create a test or quiz in which enrollees indicate the skills and knowledge required for a specific career, and the system matches them with a list of relevant courses.

INCREASE STUDENT ENROLLMENT BY X%

The tech-savvy students not only have higher standards for user experience but are also used to getting personalized experiences and communication. In the same way that young people expect personalized product offerings when shopping online, they also expect to be able to interact with their chosen university or college at every stage of their customer journey.

That means that educational institutions should look up to consumer brands in terms of marketing strategies. For example, launching personalized campaigns, using retargeting techniques, coordinating with social media, and much more should also be a part of the student acquisition strategy.

Modern students prefer to avoid unnecessary phone calls and in-person meetings. Instead, they are accustomed to online interactions, so ensure that your institution offers a variety of communication channels.

Furthermore, the younger generation expects to consume information and easily access it online. That is, providing detailed descriptions of learning programs on a website or through a contact form will increase enrollments.

CREATE MASSIVE PERSONALIZATION AND CAREER PATHWAYS FOR STUDENTS

For far too long, the majority of colleges, universities, and other educational institutions have been concerned with internal metrics such as applicant volume. To stay ahead of the competition, they must now focus more on the output: do students acquire the necessary skills? Do they land the job they desire? How prepared are they for adulthood? Today, the graduates' success is measured by how many C-level positions they hold. Or how many of them have started a profitable business.

Universities can ensure the effectiveness of education by providing students with personalized internal and external learning programs. Young people today graduate in a highly competitive environment, so having some background in their future careers is a huge advantage. Co-op programs, on the other hand, are the most effective ways to get relevant experience.

The entire educational system should shift from a teacher-centered curriculum to a learner-centered curriculum that engages and guides students in achieving their learning goals.

Technical aspects: How content management systems help address key pain points

Overall, the majority of modern challenges of educational institutions are related to online presence, including website structure and user experience for both students and employees. Meanwhile, whatever enhancements you make to study programs and materials, as well as organizational and enrollment processes, they should all be reflected in digital space.

From a technical perspective, to manage all the mentioned aspects, organizations need to have a powerful software infrastructure capable of addressing all the needs and requirements. The content management system (CMS), on the other hand, is a critical component because it is used to create and maintain all materials on the website.

The question remains: what CMS to choose? There are two types of CMS: monolithic (often called traditional) and headless. The difference is in their architecture.

Traditional (monolithic) CMSs merge the back end and front end into a single system. They usually offer a drag-and-drop or WYSIWYG editing interface that sits on top of the database and is connected to the front end layer.

Headless CMS is a content management system with a separate back end (database and business logic) and front end (the part of the website users can see and interact with). These two components communicate via API (application programming interface), enabling the integration of as many front ends as required.
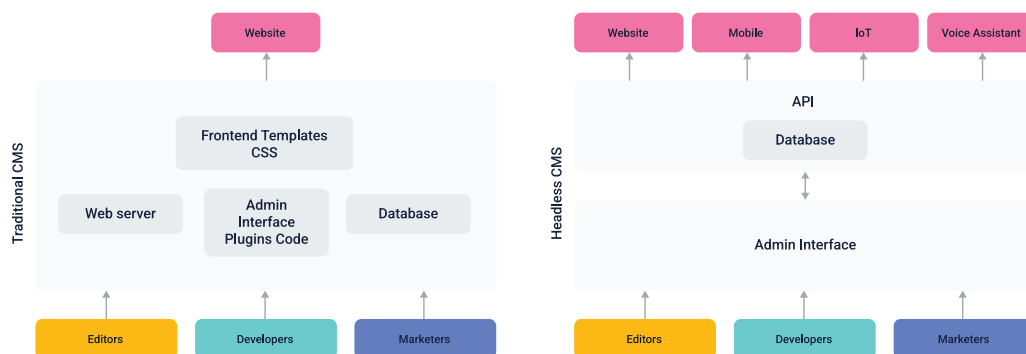
Traditional CMS vs Headless CMS

While monolithic systems are good for publishing content to a single channel, such as a website or digital portal, headless CMS expands the possibilities by distributing content to any channel. Additionally, headless solutions are proven to be more scalable, user-friendly, efficient, and secure.

Benefits of headless CMS for the education industry

As online education continues to evolve, schools speed up digitalization to provide students with relevant experiences. Meanwhile, a headless content management system is a perfect solution for developing future-proof learning environments.

Here are the primary benefits of headless architecture for the education sector:

1 CHEAPER PRICING

Due to the decoupled nature of headless CMS, it is similar to a constructor, as developers can select whatever technologies and integrations they need to create a system fully tailored to their needs. At the same time, it lowers the cost of such a solution because you only pay for the functions that you require, rather than purchasing an all-in-one software that usually comes with multiple features that remain unused. That is especially noticeable when subscribing to an enterprise plan.

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[The real cost of enterprise content management systems](#)
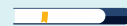
2 EASY MAINTENANCE

Unlike most traditional content management systems, a headless CMS removes the constant need for frequent maintenance and updates. With less time worrying about upgrading or helping marketers publish new content, developers can focus on adding new features and building better user experiences.

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[Software as a Service - You don't have to do all this alone](#)

3 PERSONALIZATION CAPABILITIES

With a headless CMS, create dynamic content, which means delivering different content variations, visual assets, and pages to the website users based on their previous activity, preferences, and other factors. Moreover, you can set up integrations to connect your CMS to other tools in your tech stack via an API and use the customer data from those platforms to personalize their experience on your site.

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[The example of eCommerce](#)

4   EXPANDED FUNCTIONALITY

Additionally, using an API, you can integrate best-of-breed third-party solutions to expand the possibilities of the educational platform. These could be any tools such as support, chatbots, localization, marketing integrations, etc. Such an approach allows to create a customized ecosystem that includes only the necessary instruments.

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5   EASE OF USE FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS

Despite the prevalence of monolithic CMS (WordPress is still the most used on the market), headless solutions gain a higher satisfaction rate among developers as they are more user-friendly. Simultaneously, headless CMSs with Visual Editor make it simple for non-technical users (marketers, professors, learning staff, etc.) to use the system and work with content.

Storyblok is the first headless CMS that introduced Visual Editor with real-time preview allowing marketers to create, edit and publish content without the help of developers.

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[About Storyblok](#)
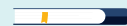
6   ENHANCED UX

With no limitations regarding design and page structure, it is possible to create and maintain better UX for end-users, which is extremely important as modern tech-savvy students expect better UX than before. They are also looking for omnichannel experiences that include student portals that can be accessed on any device.

For example, headless architecture allows to implement the flipped classroom model, which is gaining popularity due to its increased engagement. Universities, colleges, schools, and other organizations can create and publish online materials of any format and complexity so that students can conduct independent research on a topic at home, and spend time in class discussing it.

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[6 Ways a Headless CMS Plays a Crucial Role in Omnichannel Digital Strategy](#)

# Key features to look for in the CMS for educational institutions

When selecting a CMS for an educational institution, whether it's a university, college, or online course platform, make sure it has the essential functions to provide better experiences for both the internal team (developers and content editors) and the end-users – students.

VISUAL EDITOR

A Visual Editor is the main feature that allows non-technical users to easily operate the CMS. Storyblok offers its clients a simple yet highly customizable editing structure: a component-based system paired with a real-time visual editor.

First, developers create a set of components such as images, text, or forms using the framework of their choice. Whatever functions they want to include, they can tailor them to the exact needs of the educational organization.

With the components completed, content editors can use them to create any content they require using the Visual Editor, instantly seeing how it will look before publishing it due to the preview feature.
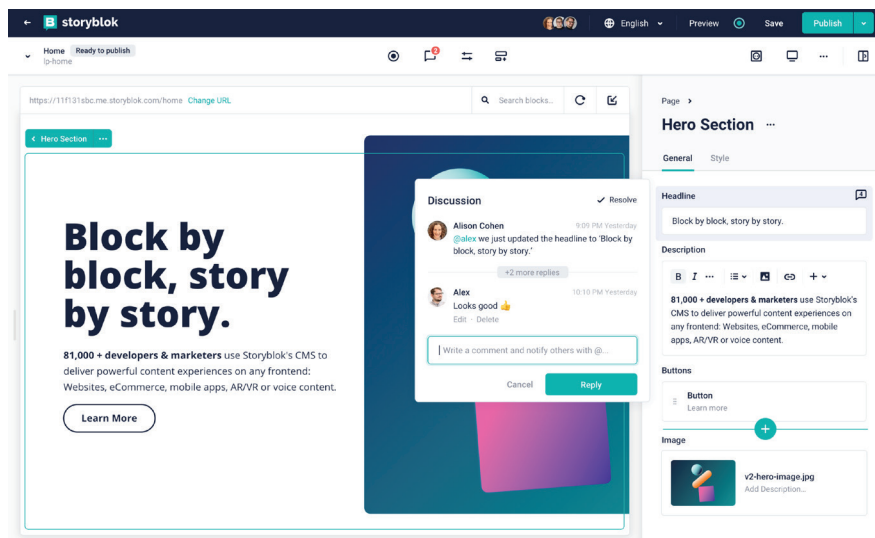
In other words, professors, teachers, or learning coordinators can easily upload the learning materials into the system without coding skills and publish them across multiple channels whenever needed.

- ✅ WYSIWYG editor
- ✅ Real-time preview

COMPOSABLE BLOCKS

When many users submit content to the system, there is a risk of content silos or inconsistency. Storyblok organizes content into nestable content blocks composed of components (pictures, fields, texts, etc.), allowing you to create reusable templates and easily modify content. Users can select and reuse existing blocks numerous times. At the same time, each block can be adjusted to fit the page.

Since blocks have a unified design, the content will look consistent across all pages, no matter who created it. This also helps to maintain brand guidelines and save precious time for the employees.

- ✅ Block Library
- ✅ Presets
- ✅ Global components
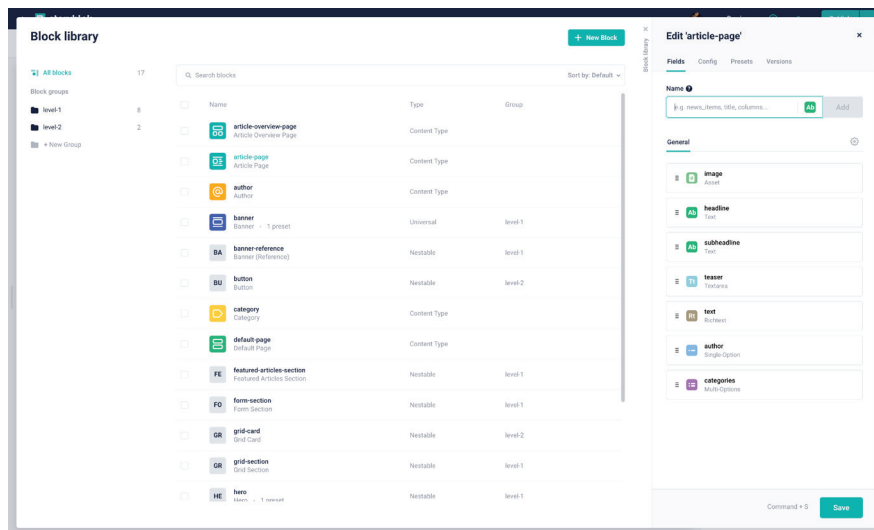
COLLABORATION TOOLS

Content creation in the education industry often means that the content will be managed by multiple people, distributed teams from different locations, or even involve external users such as freelancers or agencies. Setting custom user roles and permissions allows sharing of responsibilities between team members so that each person can manage the particular content part or even locale.

The possibility to leave comments and tag colleagues helps quickly solve any issues and maintain transparent communication. Apart from that, you can set up custom workflow stages such as "draft", "reviewing", "ready to publish," and so on to notify content editors of the next steps. There is no need to send multiple messages in messengers or emails when you can manage all content directly in the CMS and publish only approved changes.

- ✅ Custom workflows
- ✅ Custom user roles and permissions
- ✅ Collaboration Suite
- ✅ Digital Asset Manager

LOCALIZATION

Localization can be challenging when operating in multiple countries and markets without the use of specialized tools. This complicated process includes content translation, adaptation to the local market, providing local payment and delivery options, and so on.

Technically, the localization-ready CMS should support content translation, the ability to easily adapt components and content blocks, and a CND (content delivery network) to ensure a fast loading speed across all regions.

- ✅ Field-level translation
- ✅ Folder-level translation
- ✅ CDN of the content delivery API
- ✅ CDN of the assets

How Mindvalley cut down development time by 50% for their multilingual website

SUMMARY

Mindvalley is a subscription-based platform aimed at personal growth, where users can subscribe to courses, masterclasses, and content to develop their personal skills. With over 20 million students worldwide, Mindvalley's primary target audience is anyone interested in self-development and personal growth.

The company was looking for a scalable CMS that will help them develop faster and more efficiently.

- ✓ Launch 2x faster now compared to previous set ups
- ✓ Cut down development time by 50%
- ✓ 8 languages

USING STORYBLOK FOR FASTER DEVELOPMENT

Implementing Storyblok allowed Mindvalley's non-technical users greater autonomy in managing content across multiple regions, resulting in twice as fast launches in new markets. At the same time, developers were able to cut down coding time by 50% as they were no longer involved in content publishing.

> " Looking back at our pre-Storyblok days, it continues to amaze me with how much the CMS can do, and there is still so much more to discover.
>
> **Prosper Chiduku**
> Software Engineer at Mindvalley

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Key takeaways

As the schooling landscape evolves with the generations and the digitalization of almost every aspect of life, educational institutions must quickly adapt to the new reality. Modern students expect to be able to study in front of their screens rather than attending in-person classes or choosing between the two options. Generation Z is looking for personalized programs based on their career goals, as well as related job experiences, to help them prepare for adulthood.

Implementing online learning is now a basic feature that students and parents expect, especially during and after the pandemic, when most businesses switched to online.

Meanwhile, headless CMS offers various features that enable the development of an up-to-date, functional and converting learning website or a platform that will be user-friendly for developers, content editors, and students.

ABOUT STORYBLOK

Storyblok is a world-leading headless content management system (CMS) founded in 2017. Being API-first, Storyblok's features contain a powerful visual editor that allows seamless usage across teams such as marketers, developers, and content editors. The nature of being headless removes the front end component (the head) while leaving content delivery to a RESTful AP and GraphQL. In comparison, most content management systems force you to develop and build a website in a set way or a template.

Storyblok hands over the freedom to build and innovate to your developers, with the ability to use their favorite technologies and integrate the best-of-breed tools that exactly fit your needs and requirements. Furthermore, there is no need for a database setup or installation, as everything is cloud-based.

Organizations worldwide and many industries are using Storyblok as their headless content management system of choice to build great content and digital experiences for localization: for example, Mindvalley and Education First.

Try Storyblok today

Curious if a headless system is the right choice
for your enterprise?

TALK TO ONE OF OUR SPECIALISTS

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