Future-proofing your business: The case for headless eCommerce

As eCommerce continues its exponential growth, it also faces bigger challenges. In order to stay relevant in a hyper-competetive market, some businesses are moving away from the traditional model to what many call "headless eCommerce"
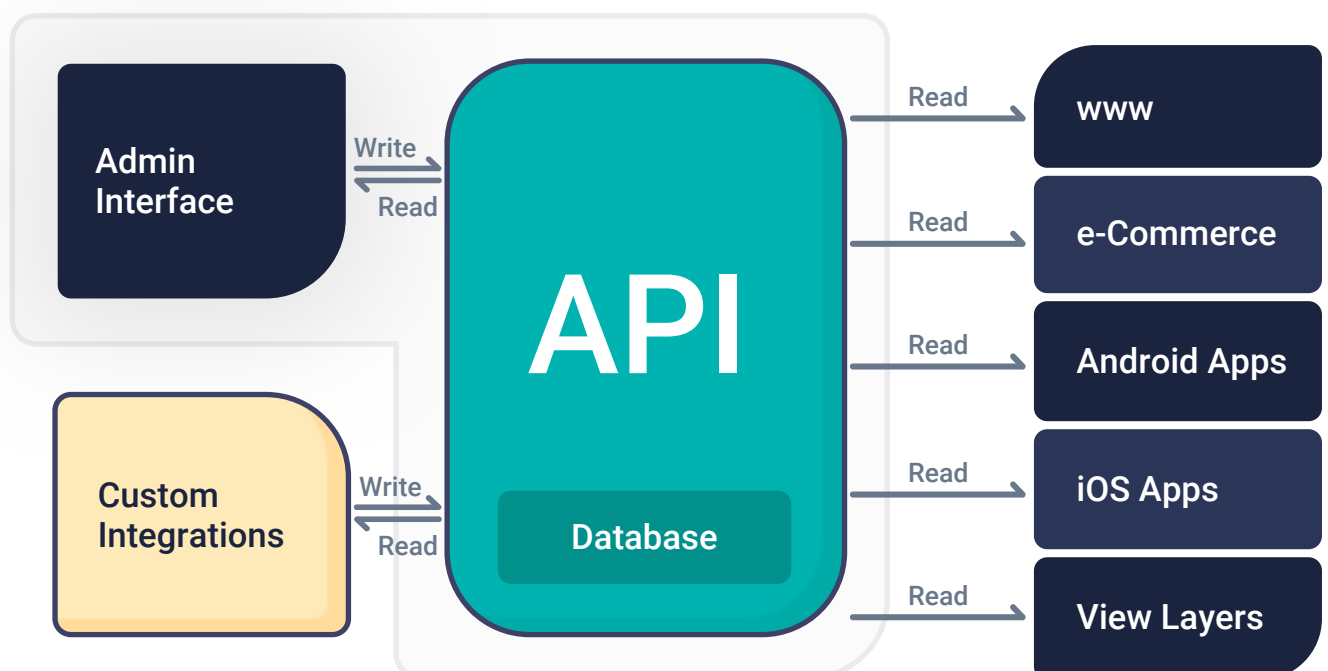
What does "headless eCommerce" mean?

In a nutshell, it means **an online business where the front-end and the back-end are separated.** In headless commerce, the presentational layer of the operation (the "head") is handled independently from the content itself (back-end, the "body").

In this approach, the data (products, blogs, etc.) is created only once in the back-end, which then can be delivered to any number of front-ends (websites, apps, IoT, etc.) through application programming interfaces **(APIs).**

The opposite is the traditional monolithic commerce, where the front-end and the back-end are locked together. Generally speaking, this means the presentational layer (front-end) usually has limited customization capabilities, as it is tied to the back-end. Additionally, since the two ends are coupled, content must be created separately for different devices. So if a product is going to be showcased in a website, a mobile app, and a screen somewhere in a shopping mall, then it must be created multiple times to fit each platform. This usually results in multiple content silos which can slow down the operations.

Headles CMS

How does headless eCommerce work?

Headless eCommerce gets rid of the content silos and concentrates everything in a single content hub, also known as a headless content management system (CMS). Headless architecture is built with the growing popularity of IoT in mind, and prioritizes delivering content to all platforms simultaneously.

The greatest advantage of headless commerce, is its ability to create the content once, and use it everywhere.

Another important aspect of headless commerce, is the separation of the CMS and the eCommerce platform.

Traditional eCommerce solutions like WooCommerce or Magento are based on a monolithic architecture and handle the front-end as well as the back-end. But a growing number of eCommerce providers like BigCommerce or Shopify also offer a headless option with access to the store's data via their API.

This separation is thought to be necessary by headless advocates, as a CMS and an eCommerce platform have completely different goals, each requiring their own unique area of expertise. Some traditional eCommerce businesses lack this separation.

eCommerce platform and CMS carry out different parts of the task:

eCommerce platform:
An online platform that offers companies the requirements of running a store, including the shopping cart, inventory, payment, and shipping management. Bigcommerce and Shopware are ecommerce platforms.
CMS:

A system that allows users to create, customize, modify, publish, and manage all digital content (text, image, video, audio, etc.) in any form. Storyblok and Wordpress are CMSs.

Headless eCommerce vs. traditional eCommerce CMS

| Traditional commerce CMS | Headless commerce CMS |

Omnichannel

| Multiple content silos for each platform | Central content hub for all platforms |

Customization

| Limited customization of pre-defined front-ends | Complete control over the presentation of the content |

Customer journeys

| Pre-made themes for the storefront with some personalization capabilities | A unique front-end made from scratch for a specific brand experience |

Speed to market

| New front-end touchpoints require changes in the back-end | Quickly create new front-end touchpoints without any change in the back-end |

Page performance

| Interconnected traffic between the two ends | Isolated traffic on each end |

Security

| Minor threats can affect the whole system due to the link between the two ends | Threats are isolated and cannot affect the whole system |

Costs

Services sold as a whole package, containing all tools regardless of usage

Services are sold separately. Users only pay for what they need and make their own stack of tools

Development

Development language is based on the service provider's choice

Developers can choose their language, as the front-end is completely independent

Onboarding

May including steep learning curve for creators, as all tools are fixed and come in a package

Creators can choose the tools they are familiar with, reducing the onboarding time

Who benefits from a headless strategy?

Headless commerce is an answer to the demands of the modern market, especially concerning omnichannel and personalized experiences. While traditional commerce is perfectly capable of answering the needs of a small online shop with a single website, problems start to show up as the business grows in size or expands to new platforms.

Generally speaking, a headless commerce is specifically beneficial for:

- Businesses with a larger catalogue of products

- Companies trying to establish their presence on different devices

- Businesses with a high rate of content output

- Cases where the competitiveness of the market requires highly personalized customer experiences

- Check out Raleigh, Dear Sam, and Asket to see some examples of headless commerce.

- In great number of outputs, uninspired copying is inevitable

Going headless

Transitioning to headless is not as complicated as it may seem like. As headless eCommerce is built upon agile principles, changes can take place relatively quickly, without any incoming steep learning curve for your team.

Transforming your current business to one driven by modern headless features can start at different places, but the most fundamental change comes from the heart of your operations, **the content infrastructure**. By implementing a headless CMS you can immediately observe how your multiple content silos transform into a central hub and your content gets published with consistent quality across different platforms. The coming change in customer experience and your team's capabilities will be almost immediate, and will open the doors for you to further move away from monolithic practices.

Storyblok takes the capabilities of a headless CMS even further by creating a content management system built specially with the issues of eCommerce in mind. It gives your developers the flexibility they need to build reliable and fast websites, while at the same time giving content creators with no coding skills the ability to edit content independently of the developers.

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> ⭐ **A headless CMS can drastically change your loading times. For example, Storyblok has helped UPC Business reduce their website's loading times by 81%. Additionally, the process only required 3 developers! Read more about it [here](#).**

As an eCommerce CMS, Storyblok targets all the key criteria of a successful customer experience. Modular content blocks and seamless integration of any new technology means your content can be customized to any level you may wish. Customized blocks of content can be then reused and reshaped to form new pieces of content. Furthermore, Storyblok's emphasis on speed results in drastically lower loading times on your customer's side. When it comes to personalization, Storyblok goes the extra step by offering you completely free internationalization capabilities.

> Some systems such as [Storyblok](#), offer a completely free trial of their service where you or someone in your company can get to experience the product hands-on.
>
> You can also visit the main [eCommerce hub](#) to gain access to other free resources.

Key Takeaway

A headless approach powered by APIs can help eCommerce businesses with many of their current problems, while potentially saving resources and costs. Headless eCommerce helps offering a greater level of flexibility and customization to your content creators, making it easier to create personalized content. Take advantage of the free trials that some headless CMSs such as Storyblok offer, to get a better understanding of how headless systems work.

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