



Content Management System (CMS) - Headless

Flexible solutions for organizing, storing, and managing digital content to increase performance across an expanding omnichannel landscape

2025 CONSTELLATION SHORTLIST

The Constellation ShortList™ presents vendors in different categories of the market relevant to early adopters. In addition, products included in this document meet the threshold criteria for this category as determined by Constellation Research. This Constellation ShortList of vendors for a market category is compiled through conversations with early adopter clients, independent analysis and briefings with vendors and partners.

ABOUT THIS SHORTLIST

A headless CMS is a content development, aggregation, storage, and management solution that is fully disconnected from any specific presentation layer. Instead, via RESTful API and content services, a headless CMS connects content from a back-end system to pull content into any number of front-end delivery layers. This enables content—along with the workflows, processes, and controls associated with that asset—to be created regardless of programming, development, or the environment language of the end delivery platform or device.

This separation serves several important purposes, chief among them freeing content creators from the confines of delivery destination limitations while also freeing front-end presentation developers from the inefficiency of developing for single-use applications. Because front-end and back-end systems are separated, developers, creators, and builders can update any underlying system as needed and independently of one another. Headless CMS depends on developer resources, so marketing teams should take note that there is no WYSIWYG editor in a headless CMS.

There is a broad market for content management solutions, ranging from traditional website-based systems to decoupled, serverless or hybrid solutions and enterprise-wide content solutions. While this category has been building steam for years, adjacent platforms in web and content are providing builders and creators with more options across web operations and enterprise content. These options are bridging gaps between the different stakeholders involved in digital engagement and will continue to put pressure on purely headless offerings to innovate for the expanding stakeholder audience. This ShortList narrows the view to headless solutions. The other types of solutions are not inferior to headless solutions...but they are different, and Constellation Research assesses them separately.











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10 SOLUTIONS TO KNOW

Constellation evaluates more than 40 solutions categorized in this market. This Constellation ShortList is determined by client inquiries, partner conversations, customer references, vendor selection projects, market share, and internal research.

-  ADOBE EXPERIENCE MANAGER
-  BUTTERCMS
-  BRIGHTSPOT
-  CONTENTFUL
-  CONTENTSTACK
-  HYGRAPH
-  KONTENT
-  MAGNOLIACMS
-  STORYBLOK
-  STRAPI



THRESHOLD CRITERIA

Constellation considers the following criteria for these solutions:

- Distinct headless architecture (microservices)
- API forward with REST or GraphQL. Increasingly, availability for both is a welcome upgrade
- Workflows
- Rule- and role-based permissions
- Flexible content modeling, including content taxonomy, sorting, and validations
- Localization capabilities for global deployment
- Security and compliance (access controls and authentication measures)
- Editor interface for creating, editing, and previewing
- Scalability to manage the increase in content volume, especially as GenAI and autonomous actions increase content production
- Support services to aid with development and deployment
- Community and user support
- Metadata management to support SEO techniques and strategies
- Best practices, especially for channel-specific presentation support and innovation
- API connections for collecting data for use in personalization and contextual content push
- Global CDN
- AI/ML powered contextual search, smart tagging, image/content recognition, and smart recommendations for content implementation
- GenerativeAI capabilities to assist with content creation, personalization and translation
- Agentic AI capabilities to generate text descriptions, translate, tag, recommend, curate and detect non-compliant content are increasingly deployed

ABOUT CONSTELLATION RESEARCH

As an award-winning Silicon Valley-based strategic advisory and futurist analyst firm, Constellation Research serves leaders and organizations navigating the challenges of digital strategy, business-model disruption and digital transformation. Constellation works closely with solution providers, partners, C-suite executives, board of directors, and its Constellation Executive Network of buy-side leaders to lead the way in research coverage and advise clients how to achieve valuable business results.

FREQUENCY OF EVALUATION

Each Constellation ShortList is updated at least once per year. Updates may occur after six months if deemed necessary.

EVALUATION SERVICES

Constellation clients can work with the analyst and the research team to conduct a more thorough discussion of this ShortList. Constellation can also provide guidance in vendor selection and contract negotiation.

BUSINESS THEMES



Marketing Transformation



Next-Generation Customer Experience



Tech Optimization



Liz Miller
VP & Principal Analyst

Liz Miller focuses on the needs of modern chief marketing officers to power the strategies and teams they lead—from the technologies that drive optimized customer engagements to the key trends that accelerate growth and innovation. She also provides insight into the security space, especially at the intersection of the customer and security, where the trust economy becomes the new measure of brand strength.

