



How Marketing Teams Can Scale Personalized Digital Content

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APPLY | **C**contentful

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The gap between **AI experimentation** and **AI ROI** isn't a talent problem: it's an architecture problem.

Marketing teams today face a paradox. As consumers increasingly expect individualized experiences, the demand for personalized, localized, multi-channel content has never been higher. At the same time, most marketing organizations haven't scaled their headcount to match that demand. The result is a widening gap between what brands need to deliver and what lean teams can actually produce.

This isn't a talent problem. The marketers navigating this challenge are capable and motivated. The problem is architectural. Most companies are still trying to execute a 2024 content strategy on a 2015 technology stack — and no amount of hard work will close that gap.

The question we hear most often from both prospects and existing customers is no longer "Should we invest in AI?" It has evolved into something more urgent: "We've been experimenting with AI for over a year. How do we finally see a return on it?"

That question is exactly what we intend to answer. Drawing on APPLY's implementation experience with global brands and Contentful's AI-native platform capabilities, we'll walk through what an AI-powered content strategy looks like in practice, and what it takes to move from experimentation to measurable ROI.

Three Structural Barriers Holding Marketing Teams Back

Before exploring solutions, it's worth naming the specific challenges that prevent lean marketing teams from scaling content effectively. In our experience, three barriers come up consistently:

Content Bottlenecks

Manual content creation, review, and localization cycles meaningfully drain a marketing team's capacity. When every piece of content — every variant, every translation, every channel adaptation — requires human effort from scratch, output is fundamentally capped by headcount. Teams end up in a constant state of catch-up, unable to test new ideas or respond quickly to market changes because they're fully consumed keeping the existing content engine running.

Data Silos

Most marketing organizations manage content using a patchwork of tools that don't talk to each other. Content lives in one system, customer data in another, campaign performance in a third. This fragmentation means content can't be tagged, searched, or reused efficiently. Teams recreate assets that already exist. Metadata is inconsistent. And the insights needed to make content smarter (what's resonating, what's not, who's engaging with what) are locked away in systems that the content team can't access.

Personalization at Scale

Every marketer knows that personalized content drives better outcomes. Personalized emails, landing pages, and product experiences consistently outperform generic alternatives across every metric that matters. But building truly personalized content at scale (different messages for different segments, across different channels, in different markets) is resource-prohibitive for most teams without the right infrastructure. Without automation, personalization can feel like a feature reserved for brands with large teams and larger budgets, when it is actually accessible to smaller teams if they know how to execute.

The Foundation: Why AI-Native CMS Is Now a Prerequisite

Legacy content management systems were built for a different era. They function primarily as content repositories, or places to store and retrieve assets. What today's marketing teams need is something fundamentally different: a content orchestration engine that can generate, organize, and deliver content intelligently, at scale.

Contentful's AI-native platform is built for exactly this operating model. Rather than layering AI features on top of an existing architecture, Contentful integrates AI capabilities at the platform level to work directly with your content infrastructure rather than alongside it. Three capabilities in particular directly address the barriers outlined above.

AI Content Generator

Contentful's AI Content Generator enables teams to rapidly produce content variants, localizations, and adaptations without starting from scratch each time. A single piece of approved content can be adapted for multiple audiences, markets, or formats in a fraction of the time it would take manually. For teams running multi-market campaigns or managing large content libraries, this capability alone can dramatically change what's achievable with existing headcount.

AI Metadata and Tagging

Automatic metadata generation and content tagging breaks down data silos by ensuring content is consistently categorized and searchable from the moment it's created. Instead of relying on individual contributors to manually tag assets, which creates inconsistency and gaps, AI handles classification at the point of content creation. The downstream benefits compound over time: teams can find and reuse content more easily, campaign analytics become more reliable, and the content library becomes a genuine asset rather than a disorganized archive.

AI-Driven Workflows

Workflow automation addresses the operational overhead that quietly consumes enormous amounts of marketing team capacity. Examples include approval routing, publishing sequences, localization handoffs, and stakeholder review cycles. By automating these processes, Contentful can reduce manual operational overhead by up to 40%, freeing teams to focus on strategy and creativity rather than process management. These capabilities are compelling on their own. But in our experience, the difference between deploying them and seeing ROI from them comes down to implementation.

The AI-Powered Content Lifecycle at a Glance

Challenge	Contentful AI Solution	APPLY Role	Business Outcome
Content Bottlenecks	AI Content Generator	Workflow design & integration	Rapid scaling of localized & variant content
Data Silos	AI Metadata & Tagging	Architecture & taxonomy consulting	Enhanced searchability & automated organization
Slow Time-to-Market	AI-Driven Workflows	Process automation & ops design	Up to 40% reduction in manual overhead
Lack of Personalization	AI Actions + Integrations	TORQ AI accelerator deployment	Dynamic, hyper-relevant experiences at scale

From Engine to Execution: The Last Mile Is Where ROI Lives

Technology alone doesn't deliver ROI. Implementation is critical. This is a lesson APPLY has learned across hundreds of digital experience projects, and it's particularly relevant when it comes to AI-native platforms.

Many organizations that have invested in Contentful are not fully activating its AI capabilities. They've deployed the platform, migrated their content, and begun using the core CMS functionality, but the AI features that would fundamentally change their content velocity remain underused. This isn't a failure of the technology. It's the predictable result of implementation gaps: integration work that wasn't completed, workflows that weren't redesigned around AI capabilities, and training that didn't translate platform features into day-to-day working practices.

APPLY's role is to close that gap. As a premier Contentful implementation partner, our team specializes in bridging Contentful's native AI capabilities with the specific operational and technical context of each client's environment. Two areas represent the highest-impact opportunities for most organizations.

AI Actions and External Integrations

Contentful's AI Actions capability enables dynamic, hyper-personalized content experiences by connecting the platform to external data sources. When integrated with a brand's CRM data, CDP, behavioral analytics, and customer segmentation models, AI Actions can serve different content experiences to different audience segments, automatically, in real time, at scale.

The potential of this capability is substantial. The challenge is that it requires careful integration architecture, thoughtful data and content modeling, and a clear personalization strategy. APPLY brings all three. Our teams design and build the integration layer that connects Contentful to a client's existing data ecosystem, and we develop the personalization logic that makes AI Actions accessible.

Workflow Automation Design

Automating workflows is straightforward in concept and complex in practice. The approval processes, localization handoffs, and publishing sequences that currently consume marketing team capacity were usually designed organically over years. Redesigning them for AI-driven automation requires a clear understanding of both the technology and the organizational dynamics.

APPLY’s workflow automation engagements combine process consulting with technical implementation, ensuring that the workflows we build reflect how teams actually work, and are designed to evolve as needs change. The result is a content operation that runs leaner without sacrificing quality, governance, or control.

The proof of this approach is in the results.

KraftHeinz + **APPLY** + **Contentful**

Kraft Heinz partnered with APPLY to modernize their digital content infrastructure using Contentful, integrating AI capabilities to dramatically increase their content output while maintaining brand consistency across markets, all operated by a lean team of resources.

The outcome:



What a Mature AI-Powered Content Lifecycle Looks Like

When the platform is configured correctly and the implementation is done well, personalization stops being a project and starts being a capability. It becomes part of how the organization operates, embedded in the workflow, automatic in execution, and continuously improving as more data flows through the system.

Here's what that end-to-end lifecycle looks like in practice:

01

Content is created or adapted using the AI Content Generator, with human review focused on strategy and brand voice rather than raw production.

02

AI Metadata and Tagging automatically classifies and organizes content at the point of creation, ensuring the library remains searchable and reusable.

03

AI-driven workflows route content through approval and publishing sequences automatically, eliminating manual handoffs and reducing time-to-publish.

04

AI Actions deliver personalized content experiences to different audience segments in real time, drawing on integrated CRM and behavioral data.

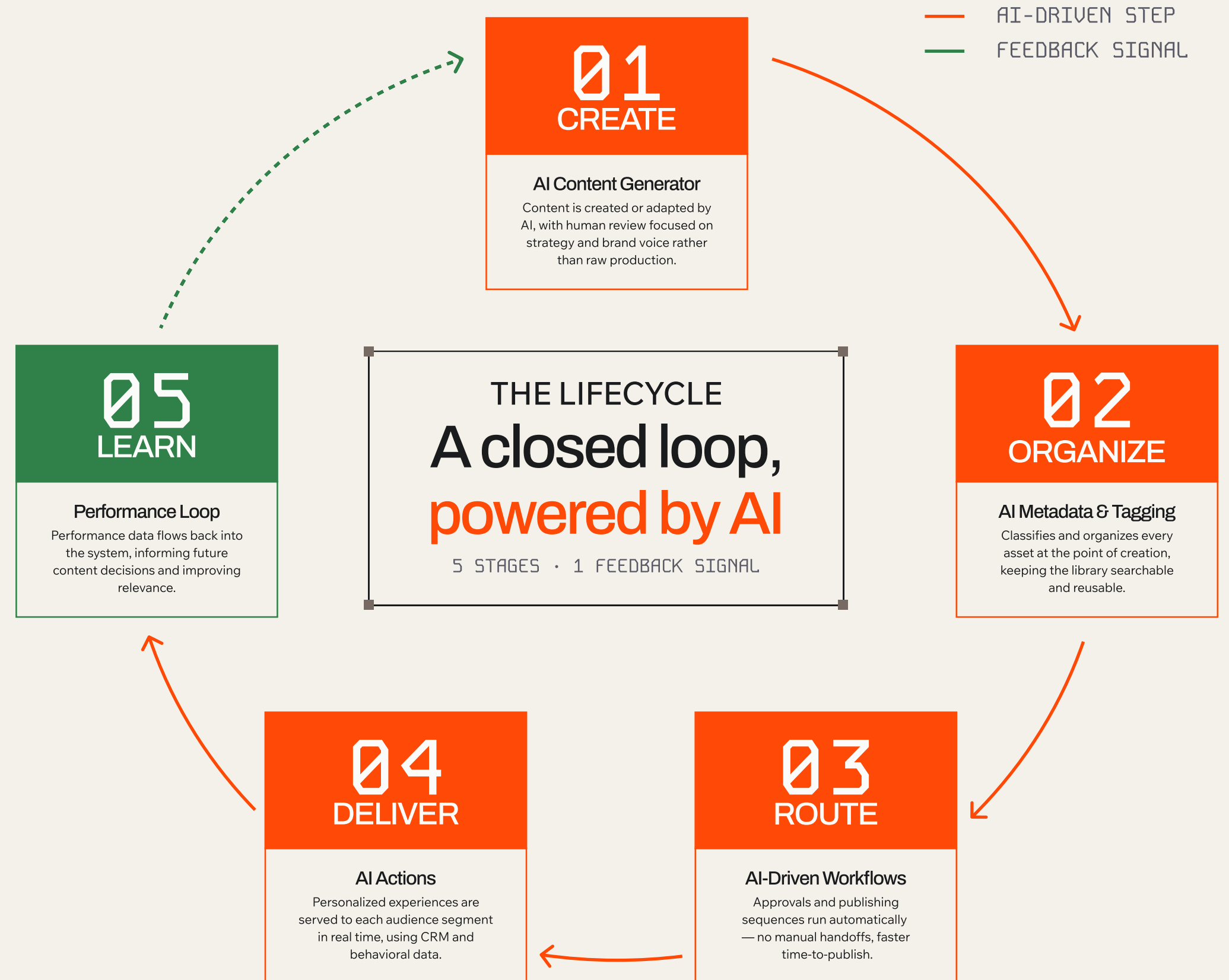
05

Performance data flows back into the system, informing future content decisions and continuously improving the relevance and effectiveness of what's being delivered.

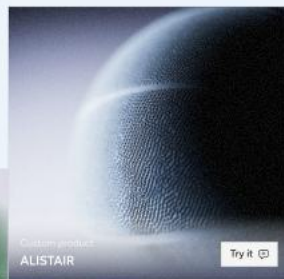
The multiplier effect for small teams is significant. The same headcount can now manage exponentially more content variants, channels, and audience segments. A team that was previously maxed out managing content for two markets and three channels can, with the right infrastructure, effectively serve ten markets and ten channels, all without adding headcount.

The business case is straightforward: faster time-to-market, higher content relevance, and measurable lift in engagement and conversion. These aren't hypothetical benefits; they're the consistent outcomes we see when organizations make the transition from content repository to content orchestration.

CONTENT PRODUCTION LIFECYCLE



TORQ_{AI}



Running
agents...

GENERATE



The Accelerator that Gets You to ROI Faster

APPLY has distilled its implementation expertise into TORQ AI, an agentic accelerator purpose-built for organizations making the transition from AI ideation to results-driven execution.

The challenge most organizations face isn't knowing what they want to achieve. It's the time and complexity of getting there. Custom integrations take months to build from scratch. Workflow redesigns require extensive process discovery. Training teams on new capabilities takes time they don't have. TORQ AI addresses all of these friction points.

TORQ AI brings together pre-built integration frameworks, proven implementation methodologies, and accelerated onboarding processes that compress the timeline from deployment to measurable outcomes.

Rather than building every component of an AI-powered content stack from scratch, organizations can leverage TORQ AI's existing infrastructure and adapt it to their specific context, dramatically reducing both time-to-value and implementation risk

Think of it this way: Contentful provides the engine. TORQ AI provides the nitro.

For organizations already using Contentful, TORQ AI provides a structured path to activating AI capabilities they may not yet be using: AI Actions, automated workflows and personalization integrations with the confidence that the implementation is grounded in proven patterns and real-world experience.

For organizations evaluating Contentful for the first time, TORQ AI provides a clear picture of what AI-native CMS looks like in practice, and a concrete path from evaluation to deployment to ROI.

Ready to Move from Experimentation to ROI?

Small marketing teams don't need more headcount to compete at scale. They need better architecture and that architecture is within reach. If your organization is ready to move beyond AI experimentation and start seeing real returns, APPLY's team is ready to help.

Talk to our team — If content velocity or brand consistency at scale is on your radar, let's walk through what TORQ AI could look like for your organization.

BOOK A CONVERSATION →

About APPLY

APPLY is a global ACx partner. Client-obsessed and built for a new era of client services. We bring together industry expertise and elite talent to connect strategy, agentic experiences, technology, and data for the world's most ambitious organizations.

As a premier Contentful implementation partner, APPLY helps organizations move from digital strategy to measurable outcomes.