

Headless Migration Checklist: How To Switch to Headless CMS

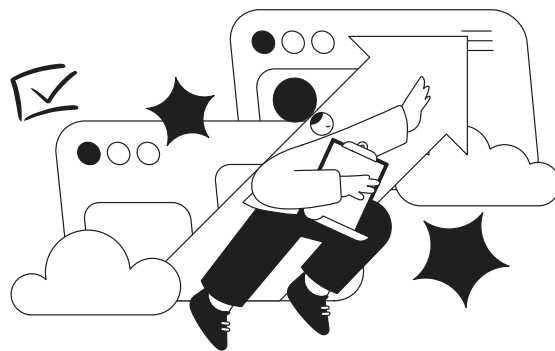
The comprehensive guide on migrating to a headless CMS for non-techies.



Introduction

Hello there, future headless CMS champion!

If you're a marketer, product owner, growth specialist, or have a similar non-tech position but are involved in content management decisions, this cheerful checklist is your new best friend.



We get it — migrating to a new CMS might seem overwhelming at first. You might be thinking, “Is this too complicated? Too expensive? Something only developers can handle?” Not at all! You absolutely can have a hand in this process and shape how you’ll interact with your shiny new system.

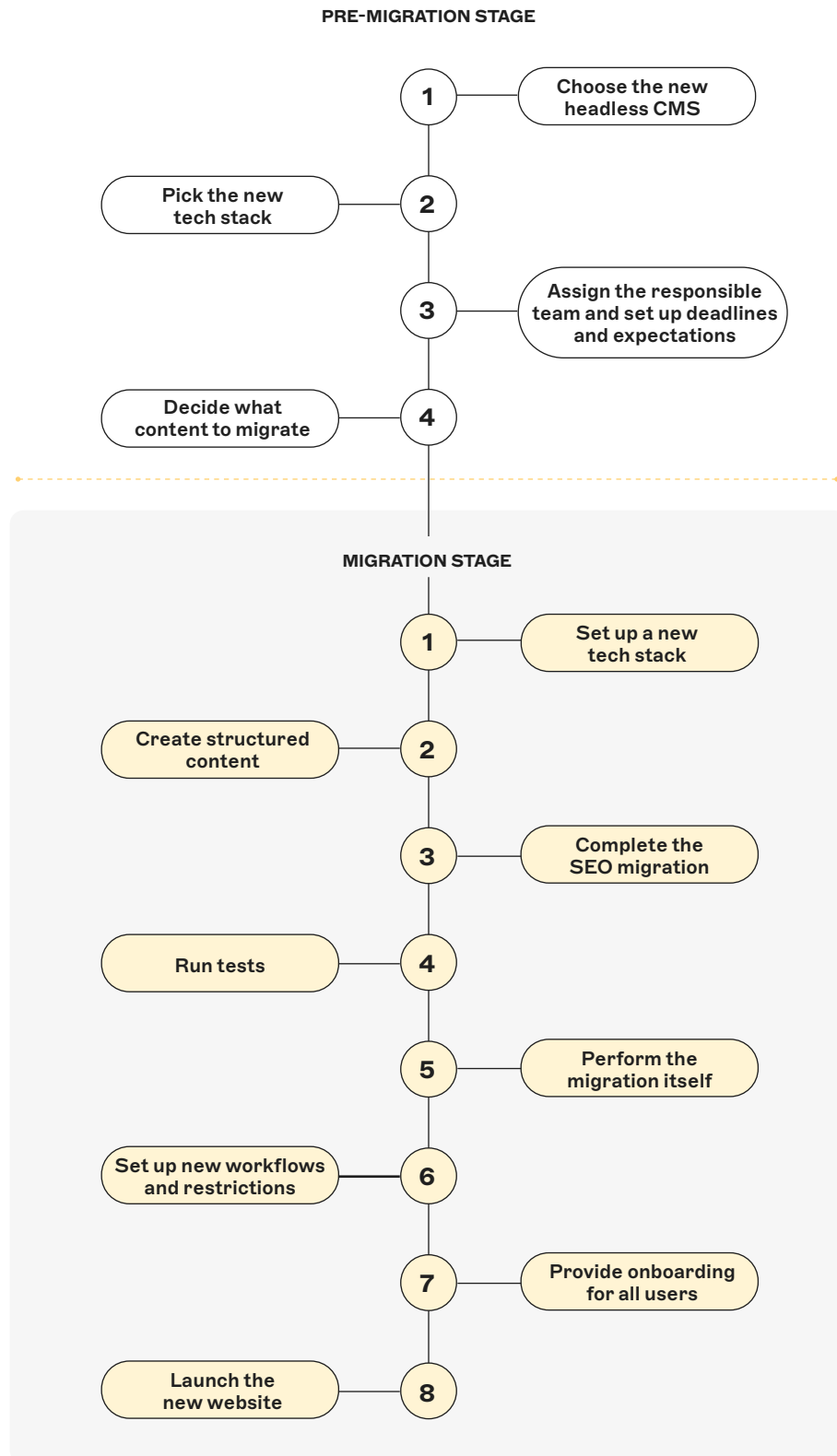
In this detailed “Headless Migration Checklist,” we’re going to guide you through the exciting journey of switching to a headless CMS. Yes, changes can feel daunting, but they’re also the gateway to amazing improvements. That’s why we’ve designed this checklist to be your roadmap to success with a smile.

Inside, you’ll discover a step-by-step guide covering everything from strategic planning and data migration to frontend integration and post-migration optimization. We’ll break down the key considerations, potential challenges, and best practices that will help you navigate this journey with confidence and maybe even a bit of fun along the way.

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Migration checklist visualization



Pre-migration checklist

1

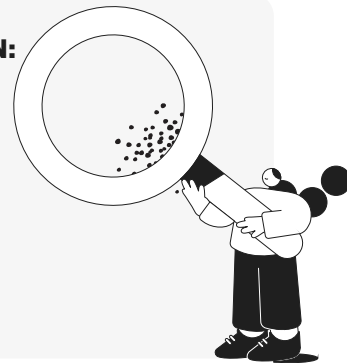
Choose the new headless CMS

Finding the perfect CMS option is the exciting first step in your migration journey. While headless content management systems offer multiple advantages compared to traditional systems, they each have their own special flavor. Most headless solutions are primarily focused on developers, providing robust functionality on the technical side but sometimes less intuitive for marketers and content editors.

When looking to migrate to a headless alternative, make sure it offers delightful features like a visual content editor, customizable workflows, user permission system, and collaboration tools that make teamwork a breeze.

3 THING TO CONSIDER BEFORE MIGRATION:

1. **Ease of use for non-technical users**
(Happy marketers = productive marketers)
2. **Community and documentation for developers**
(Support when you need it)
3. **Tech solutions and integrations**
(Connected tools for seamless workflows)



HOW DO YOU DETERMINE WHICH CMS SUITS YOUR COMPANY?

Once you've selected the key features your business needs, it's time for a detailed exploration of what vendors offer. The most trusted and insightful resources are G2 or Gartner Peer Insights, where you can read reviews from various industries and roles. Networking and personal advice from your peers are also fantastic sources of wisdom. Best of all, you can actually try most systems using free trials or enjoy personalized demos — like test-driving a new car before you buy!

2

Pick the new tech stack

This is where your tech team gets to join the party. Create a wishlist of criteria and features you're dreaming of implementing so they can match them with the technologies available.

Choosing the right stack will not only simplify your developers' work but also ensure your project's flexibility and scalability. That's why this stage should be a collaborative effort with your technical team. Partner with your developers to discuss various options and select a future-proof stack that won't require constant manual software updates.

No matter which CMS you're migrating from, you need to shape the new tech stack that includes these key points:

FRAMEWORKS	Next.js, Nuxt, React, Vue, Astro, SvelteKit, Remix, Gatsby, etc.
PROGRAMMING LANGUAGES	JavaScript, PHP, Python, Ruby, TypeScript, etc.
APIs	Graph or Rest
LIST OF INTEGRATIONS	marketing, eCommerce, analytics, etc.

DID YOU KNOW THAT CHANGING THE ENTIRE FRONTEND STACK IS NOT REQUIRED?

You can decide to keep the existing frontend and just apply changes to the bits of your codebase related to how you retrieve and render content. Options are wonderful!



CHECK OUT THE ARTICLE

[How to choose a tech stack when migrating to a headless CMS](#)

3 **Assign the responsible team and set up deadlines and expectations**

Whether you opt for an in-house team or decide to bring in external talent from an agency or freelancers, it's crucial to assign clear roles and responsibilities to everyone involved in the process. This includes not only the individuals directly engaged in the technical aspects of the migration but also those responsible for overseeing, approving, and managing the overall transition.

This collaborative approach reduces the risk of missing important features or functions during the migration, leading to a smooth and successful transition in the end — something everyone can celebrate.

Setting deadlines allows your team to prioritize tasks effectively, ensuring that each step of the migration process gets the attention it deserves. Think of it as planning a road trip — knowing where you'll stop along the way makes the journey more enjoyable and less stressful.

Clear goals and deadlines also let the team track progress and make adjustments as needed. Without them, the migration process could get chaotic, causing delays, mistakes, and unnecessary stress for the team — and nobody wants that!

4 **Decide what content to migrate**

Moving to a new CMS isn't just a technology shift — it's a golden opportunity to breathe new life into your digital content. Deciding what content to migrate is a crucial and potentially liberating step in this process.

Start by examining your existing content with fresh eyes. Evaluate each piece based on its performance, relevance, and quality. Identify the high-impact, consistently engaging content that resonates with your audience—these are your digital treasures.

At the same time, this is the perfect moment to identify outdated or redundant materials that no longer serve your objectives. Often, you'll discover content silos at this point — now's your chance to clear them out and start fresh in your new system.

Consider user journeys and experiences when deciding what content to transfer. Prioritize content that helps create a unified and compelling user experience. This selective approach optimizes the new CMS's functionality and positions your digital platform for growth and adaptability — setting you up for future success.

Migration checklist

1

Set up a new tech stack

If you've been dreaming of a complete revamp and cleanup of content and code, this is your perfect opportunity — though it's completely optional!

Again, this is a collaborative step with your development team. At this point, programmers will integrate frontend technologies into your new CMS using APIs or SDKs. You're also gathering all your integrations, ensuring they can communicate with one another and with your database — like introducing all your digital tools to each other so they can become friends!



API — application programming interface. APIs serve as bridges between multiple apps and integrations within your content management system and allow them to communicate and share data.

SDK — software development kit. SDK is like a toolbox for computer programming that provides pre-made code and tools to make building apps and websites easier and faster.

Database — in a CMS, a database is a structured digital repository that stores and organizes content, user information, and other essential data to simplify efficient website management.



IMPORTANT TO KNOW

Migrating to a headless CMS: what to consider from a developer's perspective

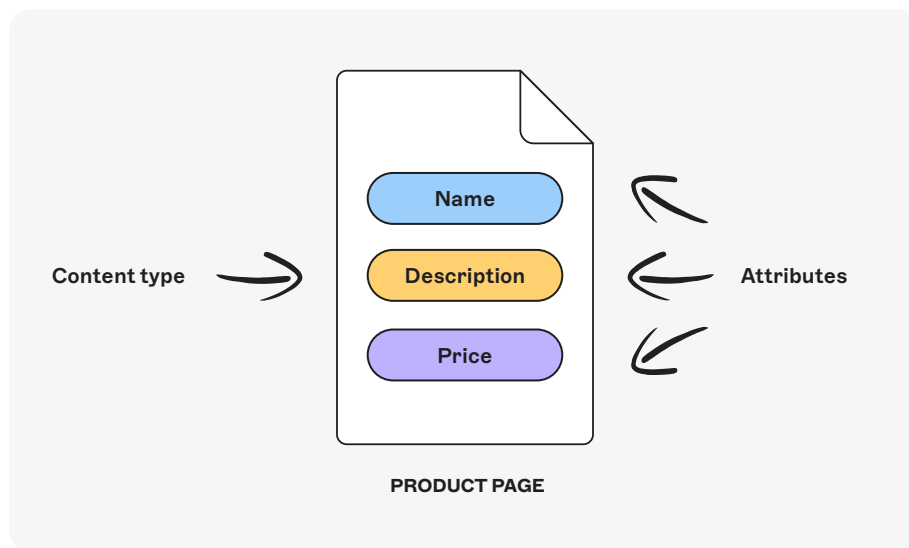
2

Create structured content

Depending on your previous CMS, you may need to adjust or completely redesign the content model, including defining content types, fields, attributes, and their relationships. This is an important and exciting step because structured content is the foundation of your website, influencing how information is organized, presented, and accessed by both visitors and search engines.

Structured content enables consistent formatting and presentation across multiple pages, ensuring a unified and polished look for your website — like giving your digital presence a stylish makeover. A well-defined content model also allows for content reuse, making it easier to repurpose information across different sections of your site — work smarter, not harder!

Finally, structured content is loved by search engines because it helps them better understand the context and relevance of your information. This can improve your website's search engine rankings, making it more accessible to users looking for relevant content — hello, increased visibility.



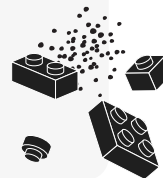
3 Complete the SEO migration

Your new content structure might also affect your SEO — but don't worry, we've got you covered.

Search engines use specific details and patterns in your content to figure out how relevant it is to user queries. If you change the structure of your content, you should carefully plan your SEO migration to preserve all that digital goodness.

It's critical to use proper redirects from old URLs to their new versions if you don't want to lose organic traffic and the SEO equity your website has built up over time.

Make sure to move all SEO-related fields, like meta titles, descriptions, and keywords. This will keep the important information that search engines use to understand and rank your content. Also, keep a close eye on your URL structure. Any changes you make to it can impact how your pages are indexed and ranked.



4 Run tests

Before the full-scale migration, conducting thorough testing is crucial to ensure a smooth and error-free transition. This involves creating a testing environment that mirrors the planned production setup and migrating smaller data portions to identify and address potential issues. To do that, developers write specialized scripts to facilitate the migration process.

By migrating a small portion of the data initially, you can closely monitor the process, identify potential bottlenecks, and promptly resolve any issues that may arise. This careful approach prevents headaches later on and builds confidence in the migration process.

5 Perform the migration itself

After extensive tests and script validation are completed, it's time for the grand transformation — migrating to your new content management system! This phase marks the culmination of detailed planning and preparation, requiring accuracy and attention to detail.

Once the last file and line of code have been successfully migrated, it's critical to double-test all integrations and third-party tools again. This ensures that your website's extended functionalities, such as eCommerce plugins, analytics tools, or payment systems, seamlessly interact with the new CMS. At this point, thorough testing is the only way to confirm all components work together harmoniously, minimizing the likelihood of post-migration glitches.

6

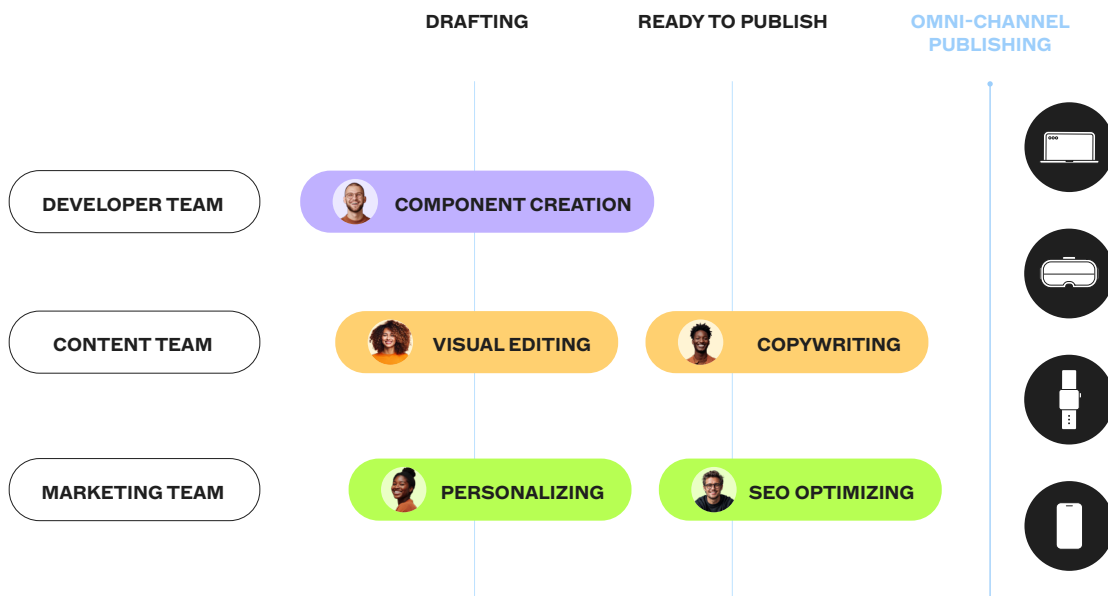
Set up new workflows and restrictions

As you transition into your new content management system, it's crucial to establish clear guidelines and permissions to foster effective team collaboration — making everyone's work life easier and more enjoyable.

Begin by configuring different access levels, restrictions, and tailored permissions based on the roles and responsibilities of each team member. This approach ensures team members can contribute without inadvertently accessing or modifying areas outside their scope — no more accidental changes.

After that, create user-friendly workflows to provide a seamless and consistent experience for all team members. Form a clear and easy-to-navigate pattern for every process, from content creation to updates. This systematic approach enhances efficiency and reduces the chances of errors or confusion during daily operations.

By structuring access levels and creating user-friendly workflows, you add another layer of protection. For example, non-tech team members won't accidentally enter areas meant for technical operations, so your data remains secure and intact — peace of mind for everyone involved!



7

Provide onboarding for all users

Although learning hubs and materials are helpful, nothing beats hands-on practice. To speed up their future work with a CMS, all users should receive proper training, preferably an interactive one — learning that's engaging and fun.

Such training can give users more than just theoretical information; it can also demonstrate how the CMS works in real-life scenarios. Your team can learn how to use the CMS interface, complete tasks, and interact with different features in a simulated environment. They'll not only learn faster but also gain a better understanding of how the system works after having this hands-on experience.

Users who know how to use the system properly are more likely to take advantage of all its features, making the most of your investment and the system's potential benefits. Interactive onboarding also creates a space for group learning where people can ask questions, get more information, and share insights, boosting collaboration.

8

Launch the new website

Welcome to a world of better performance, the latest technologies, and a seamless user experience! Now, with a headless CMS, that's not a dream, plan, or stage in your strategy — it's your new reality! Congratulations!

By migrating to a headless CMS, you've not only upgraded your technical infrastructure but also unlocked new possibilities for content creation, distribution, and management. Your team will enjoy faster workflows, your developers will appreciate the flexible architecture, and your audience will benefit from improved experiences across all digital channels.

The lower costs and increased time-to-market you'll experience are just the beginning. Your new headless CMS will continue to evolve with your needs, supporting your growth and adapting to new challenges as they arise. What could be better?

Why choose Storyblok as your new headless CMS?

Storyblok makes your headless experience Joyful.
Here is how it differs from other headless options.

	AVERAGE HEADLESS CMS	STORYBLOK
Editing experience	No preview / limited editor	Visual editor with real-time preview
Collaboration	Limited workflow personalization, complicated permission systems	Customizable workflows and user permissions, on-page commenting
Asset management	Digital asset manager often comes as a 3rd-party tool	Native digital asset manager
Support	Often limited support or comes for an extra cost	Standard support for all users at no cost, and extended enterprise-level packages
Documentation	Often unclear, complicated or outdated documentation	Well organized documentation, learning hub and community support.
Pricing	Unpredictable pricing based on vital features	Flexible and completely transparent
Your mood when using a CMS	Average	Joyful

Joyful Headless runs circles around your bloated, old-school CMS.

NEED MORE PROOF?

Here's something we're pretty excited about — Storyblok has been named the leading CMS and Momentum Leader across every one of our categories.

We've racked up 50+ awards across the board, from Headless CMS and Web Ops Platforms to Digital Experience Platforms and Enterprise Content Management.



DISCOVER MORE

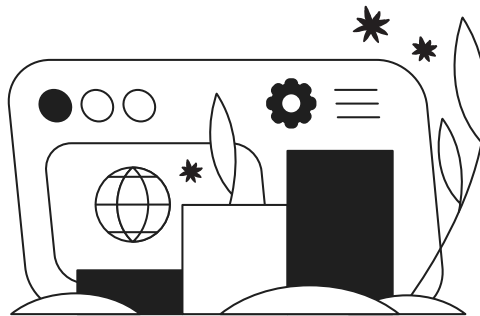
Storyblok Leads G2 2025 Spring Report: #1 Headless CMS for Usability & Momentum Leader

Key takeaways

Migration to a headless CMS might seem complex at first, but it's actually an exciting journey of transformation. It offers significant advantages for businesses in today's rapidly digitizing landscape, where delivering exceptional user experiences isn't just nice-to-have — it's essential.

Choosing the right CMS is a big decision that shapes how you'll create, manage, and distribute your content for years to come. Make sure to explore the market thoroughly before making your choice. Consider the core functionality and ease of use for all teams, including developers, creatives, and marketers.

Remember that while the migration process takes time and effort, the rewards are well worth it: increased efficiency, lower costs, faster time-to-market, and the ability to deliver content across multiple channels with ease. It's not just a technical upgrade — it's a transformation that empowers your entire organization to work smarter and achieve more!



About Storyblok

Storyblok is the headless CMS for marketers and developers who want to make bigger, faster market impact.

Developers thrive with the freedom to build better, faster, more flexible content experiences using their chosen tech stack. Marketers move with agility and independence, effortlessly editing, personalizing, and publishing content across every channel.

And customers? The seamless content experiences keep them engaged, delighted, and coming back for more.

Get Joyful.

**See how Storyblok can revolutionize
your content at storyblok.com.**

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TRY IT FOR FREE 