Core headless CMS features

A CHECKLIST

As diverse as they are, headless CMSes must contain the same baseline features, notably the following:

1

Architecture

An API-first, microservice architecture is a must for speeding up content delivery and yielding more flexibility for application development. Also important are features that enable content authors, managers, and developers to quickly and simultaneously update content across channels. Examples are library versioning and diffs.

2

API Considerations

Organizations must access content for display on different platforms, e.g., mobile apps or connected home devices. APIs are protocols through which two applications can communicate with each other. Therefore, your headless CMS must encompass the following:

A wide variety of APIs for integration and content delivery.

Webhooks that automatically alert developers of content updates at all the appropriate channels and devices.

Live previews for testing and proofreading before content goes live.

3

Workflow for the content-authoring role

A yes in answer to these three questions is paramount:

1. Can multiple authors simultaneously work on different pieces of content | on the headless CMS?

2. Is there an intuitive drag-and-drop page builder authors with minimal coding expertise can use to create pages?

3. While creating content, can you assign tasks between roles or collaborate in real time?

4

Software development kits (SDKs)

SDKs are prebuilt code packages on top of headless CMSes that facilitate app development. Verify if the SDKs that accompany the CMS you're evaluating are compatible with your technology stack to avoid having to customize integrations or switch to another programming language.

5

Content delivery networks (CDNs)

CDNs expedite loading of websites by delivering cached versions of content from different nodes worldwide. Headless CMSes that are integrated with CDNs serve content fast and reliably to audiences regardless of their location.

6

Image optimizations

Given the critical role images play in today's digital experiences, optimizing images is a crucial task. Look for features such as automatic resizing and compression of images along with their speedy delivery on various devices. Bottom line: Your pages must load quickly no matter the device.

7

Core audience

Some headless CMSes are aligned more toward developers who rely on SDKs and CI/CD to do their job. Others accommodate content authors more. Before making a purchase, be sure to find out who the headless CMS is primarily built for, e.g., by viewing a live demo.

8

Flexibility of open source

Since open-source platforms spell flexibility for customization and changes, it pays to find out if the headless CMS you're considering is open source. However, open-source solutions often require more internal development work as opposed to software-as-a-service (SaaS) products, whose tasks are handled remotely by the vendor.