

Why your CMS is driving away top talent





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Legacy technology costs more than you think

HOW CMS AFFECTS RETENTION

Turnover among top talent is an expensive problem, costing an estimated 33% of an employee's annual salary, according to [Work Institute](#).

This can be a significant financial loss for companies when you include recruitment and onboarding costs, the cost of a temporary hire or revenue lost on project delays, and productivity lost by managers who have to spend time on departure and hiring activities. [Devskiller](#) calculated that losing a developer can cost \$33,000-\$60,000 or more in lost productivity, including time spent by managers on hiring.

Technology matters when it comes to retention. Employees at companies that lagged behind in technology were 5xs more likely to be frustrated and 6xs more likely to want to find work elsewhere compared to employees at companies considered to be technology leaders, according to research from [New Digital Workplace Divide](#).

Most people working on digital products are impacted by the content management system, including the writers who create and edit content, developers who build and maintain websites and apps, and digital leaders who direct development of new products. The technology used to manage content across products can either enable work or become a source of frustration.

We'll explore how CMSes impact retention and hiring for the most in-demand roles with a deeper dive into how legacy systems contribute to frustration and high turnover.

This information will help elevate the conversation around your CMS by demonstrating that selecting the way you manage content is more than a tactical decision. It's a strategic business driver that impacts your whole organization's ability to retain top talent and foster future digital leaders.

“The way in which technology serves as an enabler to meeting job expectations ... has a significant effect on engagement, retention and productivity.”

–Chris Cancialosi, PhD, Partner and Founder at gothamCulture, quoted in Forbes, [“Outdated tech is costing you more than you think”](#)



The key to happiness

There are nine workplace elements that consistently predict turnover, according to [Gallup research](#). One of them is having the right tools for the job at hand, along with the opportunity for individual contributors to do their best work in the areas where they excel. Gallup also found that employees who don't feel like they have opportunities to do what they do best—every day—have a high potential for turnover.

Aging CMSes are not providing your teams the “equipment” to do their jobs effectively and efficiently. Instead, they burden your staff with languages they don't love, environments that cause redundancy, and tools that prevent ideal workflows.

For example, before switching to Contentful, [Trunk Club \(Nordstrom\)](#) tasked a group of editors with

maintaining and editing content across CMSes that did not sync. Developers had to push every change live.

When editors are copying and pasting content and developers are needed to push every little change live, you are not only misusing the limited time and effort of your frontline workers, you are also wasting valuable time they could be using to make meaningful and even disruptive contributions. It also takes away time they could be using to master new skills and elevate their contributions to the organization.

What's more, mastering transferable skill sets and making meaningful contributions are two key factors in increasing employee performance and satisfaction, according to Daniel Pink, author of *Drive*, as captured in this video summary by [RSA](#).

Traditional CMSes frustrate developers

Developers are arguably the most coveted talent pool, with job growth projected to be much faster than average for the years 2016-2026, according to the [Bureau of Labors Statistics](#). They also have turnover rates that are well above average: as high as 23.3% depending on the type of developer, according to research by [LinkedIn](#).

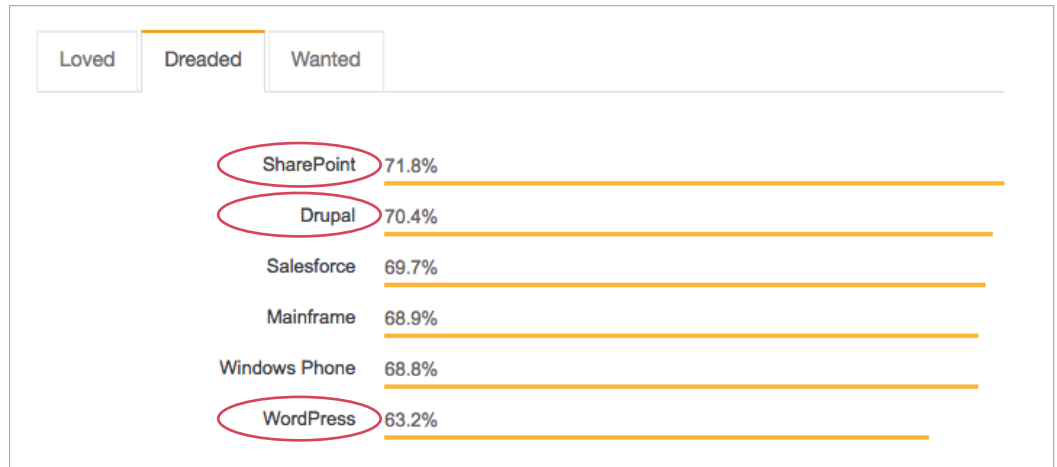
In their 2017 and 2018 developer survey results, [Stack Overflow](#) provides some insight into developer turnover. Respondents tended to be happier with their career as a developer than they were with their current job and 75% of

developers said they were looking for, or open to, new opportunities. Of particular note is that developers don't need to be actively looking to learn about new jobs: 60% of developers said they learned about their current job from friends, family or someone who contacted them.

It's critical for companies to address factors that frustrate developers. Being forced to work with last-decade legacy tools can easily lead them to consider the offers that are likely sitting in their inboxes.



Three of the top six most dreaded programming platforms are CMSes, according to StackOverflow's developer survey.



CMSES REQUIRE WORKAROUNDS AND MESS UP DEVELOPERS' CODE

A common selling point for some of the most popular CMSes is that it will be easier to find developers who can work with them, but this might be a false assumption. Some of the most popular CMSes made the list of developers' most dreaded platforms in the Stack Overflow surveys. That's not surprising when help materials for these CMSes include long lists of known problems with advice for how to work around them.

Another selling point for popular CMSes is that there are plugins to meet your every need. However, these customizations may fix one problem while causing new problems in other parts of the code. Enter one more frustration point that developers have to identify and troubleshoot or work around.

Looking for workarounds and troubleshooting problems caused by plugins that mess up their code isn't what developers do best. It doesn't maximize the contributions they can make to an organization.

Companies that choose or keep legacy systems that developers dread might be setting themselves up for high turnover and more difficulty recruiting new developer talent.

“When you talk to front-end developers, their number one complaint about CMS is that it messes up their HTML code and makes them look for workarounds.”

–Petr Palas, Hackernoon, [“How I built a CMS and why you shouldn’t”](#)



LEGACY SYSTEMS LIMIT OPPORTUNITES FOR DEVELOPERS TO GROW

Developers want to choose the languages, frameworks and technology they use for each project. This was the second most important factor in assessing new jobs, according to the 2018 Stack Overflow survey. Choice of technology and professional development opportunities were also on [Tech Republic's top ten list of perks that tech professionals want the most](#).

Legacy systems that dictate the languages developers can use limit professional development opportunities to master new skills and technology. Their only options are to moonlight on a project with the tools of their choice, or change companies.

Not only does being committed to a legacy system restrict a developer's ability to choose the best tools for each project, Stack Overflow found that the languages a developer uses impacts their salary, with programmers in newer languages generally earning higher amounts than those in languages required by legacy systems. This gives developers a strong motivation to choose organizations that offer projects and professional development opportunities to master new languages and technology.

MAINTAINING AN AGING SYSTEM ISN'T AS SEXY AS DEVELOPING SOMETHING NEW

Developers aren't able to stand out or help your company stand out if they are doing the same maintenance routines every other company does to maintain an old CMS.

New developers join an organization excited to create new tools and applications for your business. But when they are saddled with a monolithic system that is crippled with technical debt, their day-to-day becomes patching and workarounds that take time away from innovative (and satisfying) work.

CMSes that tie content management to presentation require developers to hack the existing code to create unique pages and digital products. Forcing new code into an already bloated CMS makes the CMS less stable. The new code is a customization that is prone to break with future CMS updates, meaning more troubleshooting for the developer.

Working in an outdated CMS also limits the developer's ability to write clean code that is future-proof and able to scale well. This is more work for the developer to maintain and impacts performance for the end user. [Leica Microsystems](#) achieved 200% faster app load times by switching from a traditional CMS to Contentful's modern content infrastructure with SDKs and a built-in CDN that empowers their developers.



Developers are looking for modern technologies that help them stay satisfied and relevant.



The organizational impact of traditional CMSes

THE IMPACT ON DIGITAL LEADERS AND PRODUCT MANAGERS

Finding a steady supply of developers to maintain an aging system is not the same as finding developers who will be your next generation of digital leaders. This review left on Glassdoor sums up the talent risk outdated technology poses to your future digital leaders:

“If you are looking to retire, it is a good company, however, if you are a young engineer looking to learn and grow your career path, this is not for you.”

–Software developer in Georgia

It is critical to attract and retain developers who have the skills and motivation to move your business forward, not those who are just looking for a place to get started or to wind down their careers.

Current digital leaders and project managers are also at risk of CMS frustration. Dealing with content that is trapped in one CMS and needed in another, or design elements that need to be resized and uploaded in multiple places, or a tech team that is bogged down maintaining an outdated system instead of building new products, is not doing what they enjoy. It’s also not the type of strategic contribution they are expected to make.

“Product team members are spending 72% of their time on tactical activities, leaving just about a quarter of their time for the high-value, strategic activities,” according to Pragmatic Marketing in its 18th-annual [Product Management & Marketing Survey](#).

Monolithic systems that carry huge technical debt force digital leaders to deploy developers to meet day-to-day needs—they’re fixing problems, not building new products.

Instead of feeling like the hero who makes technology work, they have to deliver the dreaded news that a new application will require weeks of customization to integrate with an existing platform. They might have a seemingly simple task that should take a few hours to complete, but with the existing CMS takes a days to reach the front of the developers’ queue.

THE IMPACT ON WRITERS

“The leading complaint about CMSes among non-technical end users is the complexity of routine tasks,” wrote CMS2CMS in their blog post, “[The real reasons people hate their CMSes](#).”

People want to do their best work. For a writer, that’s writing content. Once they’ve finished drafting and editing, they’ve contributed their best work, but then they’re stuck also performing a complex series of non-writing tasks to get it published: Fitting content into one-size-fits-all templates, formatting and tagging, tracking content through reviews, resizing images, copying final content into multiple CMSes, and coordinating with developers to push content live.

Struggling with a CMS that drags out the publication process causes delays, causing content to sit for days or weeks. At best, this delays the gratification of seeing their hard work go live; at worst, business-critical information grows stale before it reaches the intended audience.



THE IMPACT ON DESIGNERS

"I've spoken to design leaders at Apple, Google, Facebook and other companies with growing design organizations, and they're all familiar with this phenomenon. It seems there are not enough designers to meet the demand."

– Alex Schleifer, VP of Design at Airbnb, in his article on [First Round Review](#)

Carrying out repetitive tasks embitters designers, with 40% citing this type of stagnation as a reason to consider leaving their job, according to a survey

conducted by [Luna Parker](#). Yet many organizations still task designers with creating multiple image sizes that will be uploaded in different sections of the CMS.

The role of a designer is also changing, with a greater demand for UI/UX designers who have development skills, according to Shannon Vize, Digital Strategist for Mondo, in "[The 4 hardest roles to fill in tech & digital marketing](#)." As designers take on more of a developer role, they are likely to run into many of the CMS frustrations that developers face, taking more time away from the creative design work they love.

A modern solution to the CMS problem

CHOOSE A CONTENT INFRASTRUCTURE THAT REDUCES FRUSTRATION

Technology should enable people to do their best work every day and make meaningful contributions to an organization's success.

When a CMS holds staff back or forces them into a series of workarounds, it's time to consider a new content infrastructure that:

- 1. Reduces complexity:** Start with a content model for your exact needs, and empower developers to choose the best programming languages for each project
- 2. Reduces siloes:** Manage a portfolio of digital products with a single, flexible content infrastructure
- 3. Increases interoperability:** Integrate content with, and from, preferred platforms and services without the redundancy of copying and pasting text or manually resizing images

- 4. Increases reach and relevance:** Extend content into new products and geographies, such as multi-channel uses
- 5. Increases agility:** Ship and iterate digital products faster—on websites, apps, and devices

Contentful offers a content infrastructure that enables developers, designers, and editors to work in parallel using the tools they like best.

Product managers and digital leaders can focus on strategy and empower their teams to develop and ship products faster. Writers and designers use customized interfaces to create content and design libraries that can be used and maintained across digital products from one centralized hub.

Enabling your team members to operate independently allows them to better coordinate in order to make meaningful contributions to their shared goals.



Contentful works in harmony with other tech so that developers can choose the languages and tools that work best for each project, and incorporate them for future use.

- Say goodbye to worrying about image resizing
- Feel secure as you push out changes thanks to our enterprise-grade governance and version control
- Reach global audiences with multilingual translations
- Create streamlined workflows with roles and permissions for all your content governance and approval needs
- Work smarter, not harder, with one-click previews and publishing to any device, whether a web page, mobile app, kiosk, IoT wearable, or virtual assistant

The cost of turnover is high, so enabling and retaining your teams should be a factor when choosing to keep or replace legacy systems. Removing CMS frustrations means valuable, hard-to-replace employees can spend more time celebrating success and less time looking for greener pastures.

Learn more about Contentful and how it can empower your teams to do their best work faster by [talking to one of our experts](#).

