



State of the Headless CMS Market 2020.

About Kentico Kontent.

Kentico Kontent is the world's leading cloud-based headless CMS platform. Robust APIs, webhooks, and flexible content models give developers full control over the structure of their content and how it's delivered to their websites and applications. The APIs deliver clean, structured content that can be pulled into any experience and technology stack.

On top of this headless foundation, Kontent includes an intuitive authoring experience that lets marketers focus on content creation and business workflows without requiring developer involvement. This frees developers to focus on what they do best—building engaging online experiences that look great in every channel.

Companies across a wide range of industries have built their online experiences on top of Kontent, including Vogue, PPG, Oxford University, AC Milan, and Konica Minolta. Additionally, Kentico is regularly included in key industry reports published by Gartner, Forrester Research, and G2.

About this report.

It's not so long ago when only early adopters were using headless content management systems (CMSs). However, the market has been shifting in recent years quite significantly, and headless CMSs have been adopted by the biggest and most successful organizations in the world. Not only has the market been changing, but also leading headless CMSs have incredibly developed their apps and operations. Companies such as Contentful, Kentico Kontent, or Contentstack are now full-fledged players in the Enterprise CMS market.

Such a dramatic increase in popularity and usage of the headless CMS inspired us at Kentico Kontent to take a closer look at the current state of the headless CMS market. The report is based on our global survey conducted among more than 1,000 marketers and developers from the US, the UK, Germany, and Australia. It provides great insights into the headless CMS market such as:

- What the top three advantages and disadvantages of using a headless CMS are
- How many marketers and developers have experience working in a headless CMS
- Why the idea of using a headless CMS seems to be less appealing than the reality of it
- How many companies are using microservices to build their digital experiences

The State of the Headless CMS Market 2020 gives you answers to all these questions and much more, but the next step is on you—so dive in. Enjoy the read and let us know what you think!



Vojtech Boril.
VP Growth & Marketing, Kentico Kontent



**Choose
a headless
CMS wisely.**

The CMS market is now some 25 years old, so you may think it's mature, and there's nothing new to be invented. Still, we've seen a dramatic growth of headless CMS in recent years.

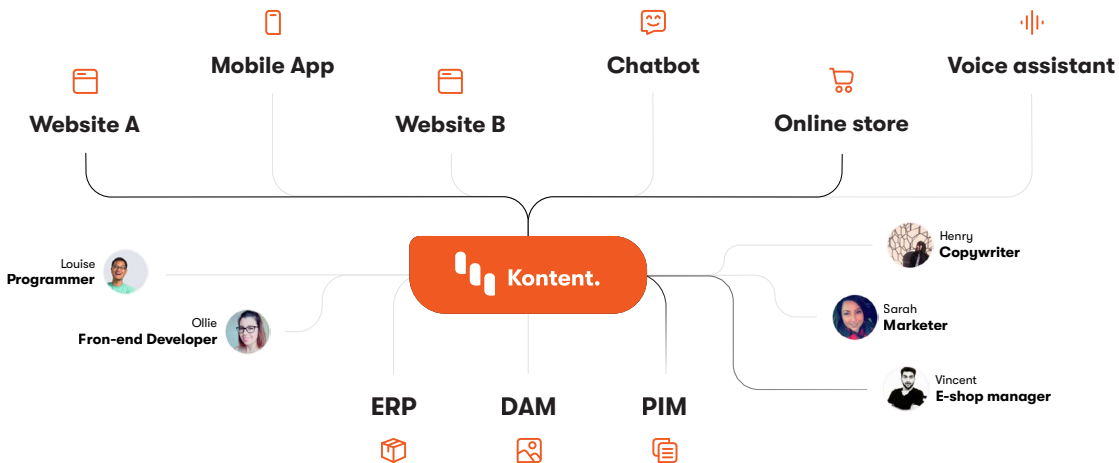
If you're about to read this report, it's likely you're considering using a headless CMS in your organization. Here's some advice on what to look for.

Headless CMS opens new frontiers for content

Headless CMS represents an inflection point for the industry. It's API-first, cloud-first, and content-first. It removes many limitations of the traditional CMSs, but also comes with new challenges.

Unlike the traditional CMS, the headless CMS focuses only on content creation and its delivery via API. It doesn't come with any "head"—there's no templating engine that would say how the content is displayed.

It means the headless CMS strictly separates content and its presentation. Once the content is created, it can be displayed on any device, using any technology. This separation of concerns also makes headless CMS a perfect fit for building modern digital products using a microservices architecture.



Agility drives the demand for headless CMS

As organizations go through their digital transformation, they realize they need to become truly agile. They need to embrace a new way of working and technologies that allow them to shorten time to market and quickly respond to customer feedback.

The old monolithic systems that often take years to deploy can't keep pace anymore.

That's why organizations increasingly choose a pure headless CMS. It comes as a cloud-native service and can be used immediately without complex setup, maintenance, and upgrades. It provides a REST API or GraphQL API that can be used in a microservices architecture. It brings the ultimate flexibility for building modern digital products on any platform.

Mind the business user gap

Still, you should be careful when choosing a headless CMS. Most headless CMSs were created by developers to meet the needs of developers. As a result, business users often struggle to adopt headless CMSs:

1. They miss proper content governance throughout the content lifecycle.
2. They have a hard time working with content disconnected from the presentation.
3. They rely heavily on developers when they want to create new pages and control the layout.

Content as a Service brings governance to headless CMS

Fortunately, there's a solution to all these challenges. You just need to go beyond a pure headless CMS.

Content as a Service (CaaS) is a new approach to working with content. It's built on top of the headless CMS architecture and provides all its technical benefits.

At the same time, it provides business users with rich functionality to manage content across its entire content lifecycle—from assessment to planning, collaborative creation, delivery, personalization, and optimization.



As such, Content as a Service enables the headless CMS to become a centralized content hub for enterprise organizations.

Use a channel-specific layer

While the channel-agnostic nature of headless is largely beneficial, it may provide a less optimal solution for the business users compared to a traditional web-first CMS.

Again, the solution is extending a headless CMS with an additional layer for managing specific channels, such as websites, while maintaining all benefits of an API-first approach.

Such a layer may also help with empowering users to do more without developer help, by giving them control over components representing the page, using a drag-and-drop interface.

Give headless CMS a test drive

Whether you're new to headless or you've used one before, you may have many preconceptions based on what you've heard or your initial experience. However, the headless CMS solutions get more mature every month. Since the core functionality is very similar across products, the difference is in what you get on top of that.

The best way to see how a headless CMS can work for you is to try it yourself. [Create a simple project](#) and—most importantly—see how it works for your business users—your fellow marketers, content writers, and subject matter experts who will use the CMS to tell their stories.



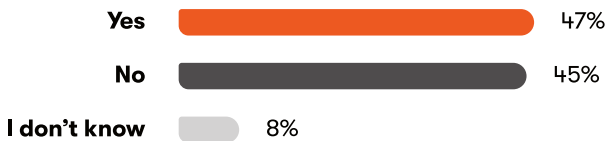
Petr Palas.
CEO, Kentico Software



The headless CMS survey results.

1 Have you ever heard the term “headless CMS”?

The respondents could choose only one answer.



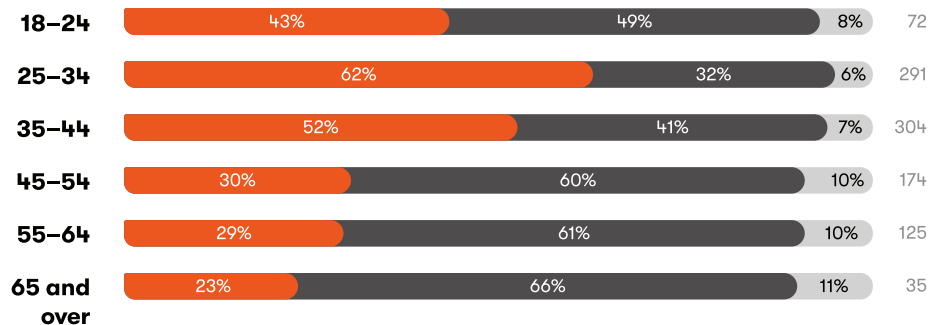
N = 1,001 respondents

Out of 1,001 respondents, 51% of developers and 41% of marketers stated they'd heard the term “headless CMS” before.



It's interesting to see that **familiarity with the term decreases with age**. If you look at the chart below, you'll discover that 62% of people aged 25 to 34 know what a headless CMS is. On the other hand, only 30% of those aged 45 to 54 are familiar with the term, and the percentage steadily decreases to 23% for respondents of 65 years and older.

Age



“ Having worked with headless CMSs now for a few years, the Luminary team are seeing the benefits go well beyond just a more seamless developer experience.

With platforms like Kentico Kontent maturing, the experience for the editor and marketer is no longer secondary. Web Spotlight and the collaborative editing environment have helped to lift the experience to the point where now we are seeing a strong preference for mature headless CMSs over traditional monolithic solutions in the eyes of the editors and marketers, not just the developers.

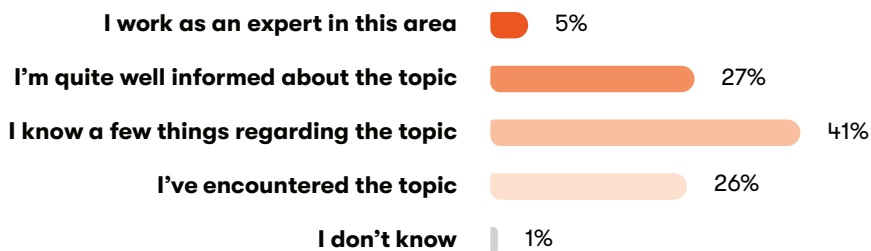
When you also factor in the end result of all this which is faster, more consistent, and feature-rich customer experiences, it's becoming a very compelling proposition for our clients.”



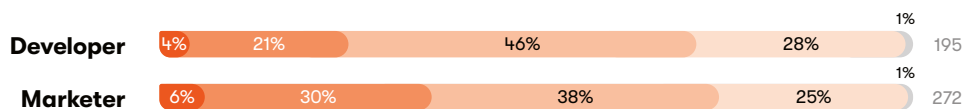
Adam Griffith.
Managing Director at Luminary

2 How much do you think you know about “headless CMS”?

The respondents could choose only one answer.

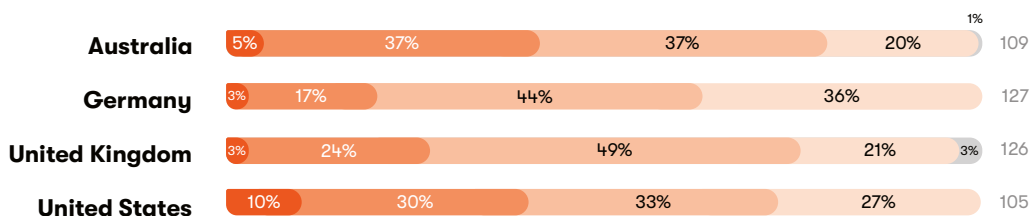


The next question was meant to explore how much those familiar with the concept of headless CMS knew about it—whether they'd only encountered the topic, or they were experts in that field.



N = 467 respondents who've heard of the concept of headless CMS

What's impressive is that **32% considered themselves to be either experts or quite well informed**. If we divide the respondents into two groups, we can see that 36% of marketers believe they know a lot about headless CMSs (as opposed to 25% of developers).



When looking closely at the four countries, we can say that Australians and Americans estimate they know more about the subject than Germans and British people.

“Moving to a headless, or Content-as-a-Service (CaaS), digital infrastructure model has undoubtedly accelerated our clients’ digital transformation. The ability to utilize the same content across multiple endpoints has been a game-changer for several brands that we work with.

The pandemic has meant that communications and operational activities are increasingly having to happen in digital spaces. As a result, the efficient delivery of content to different audiences, and through different channels, has become even more critical to maintaining and increasing customer engagement.

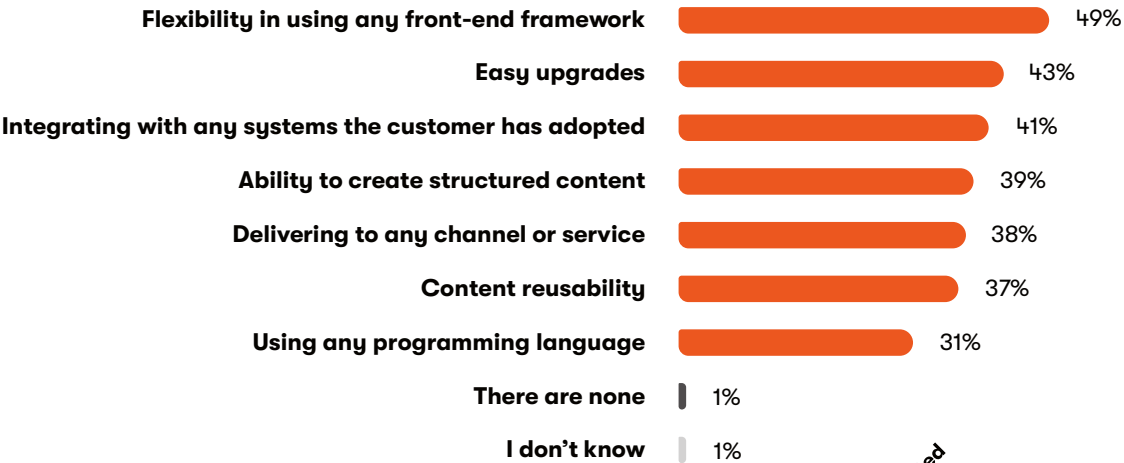
Utilizing Kentico Kontent as the delivery tool for one recent consumer-focused brand meant we could fast-track development and deliver the entire digital product inside three weeks. It’s not about working harder when thinking about switching to a headless or CaaS model, it’s about thinking smarter and leveraging the opportunities on offer.”



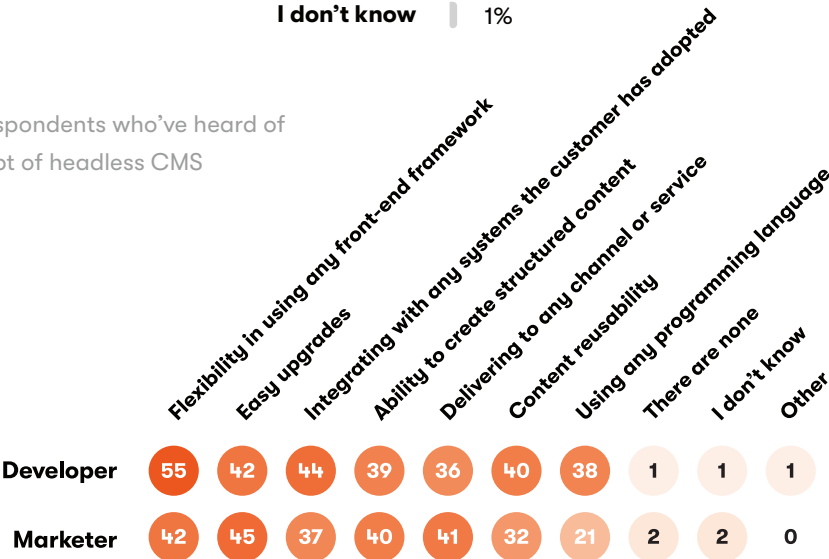
Wes Maynard.
Digital Performance & Experience
Lead at The MTM Agency

3 In your opinion, what are the advantages of headless CMSs (compared to traditional CMSs)?

The respondents could choose more than one answer.



N = 467 respondents who've heard of the concept of headless CMS



Almost half (49%) of respondents perceive **flexibility in using any front-end framework** as the greatest advantage of headless CMSs. More than 40% also highlighted **easy upgrades** and **the ability to integrate with any systems the customer has adopted**.

Only 1% of respondents believed there no advantages of using a headless content management system, which shows that people have a positive opinion on this type of CMS.

“With a headless CMS, the marketer has the ability to quickly deliver their centrally managed and controlled content to a variety of channels and business applications without having to consider different technologies. This enables them to react agilely and with an outstanding time to market to the ever faster-changing requirements of the business.”

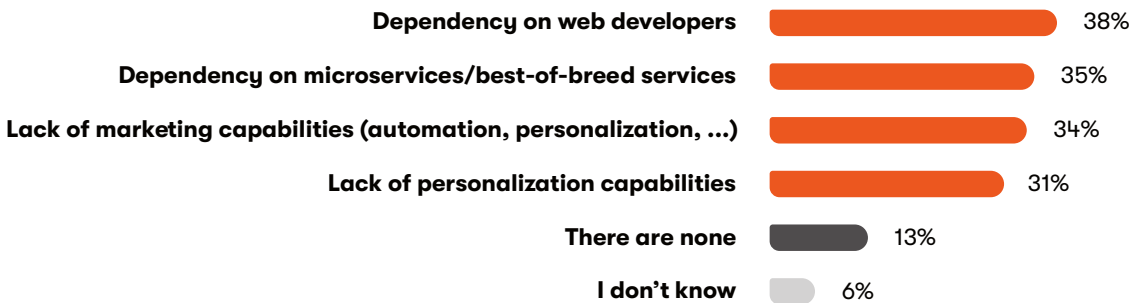


Dirk Fliescher.

Partner and Senior Consultant at VIU AG

4 In your opinion, what are the disadvantages of headless CMSs (compared to traditional CMSs)?

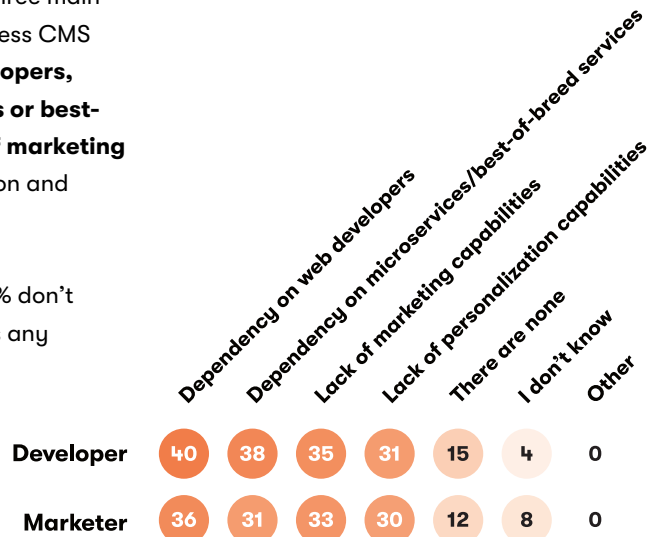
The respondents could choose more than one answer.



N = 467 respondents who've heard of the concept of headless CMS

The survey found out that the three main disadvantages of using a headless CMS are **dependency on web developers**, **dependency on microservices or best-of-breed services**, and **lack of marketing capabilities** (such as automation and personalization).

What's really positive is that 13% don't think using a headless CMS has any disadvantages.



5 Have you ever used any headless CMS product (e.g., Contentful, Contentstack, Kentico Kontent, etc.)?

The respondents could choose only one answer.

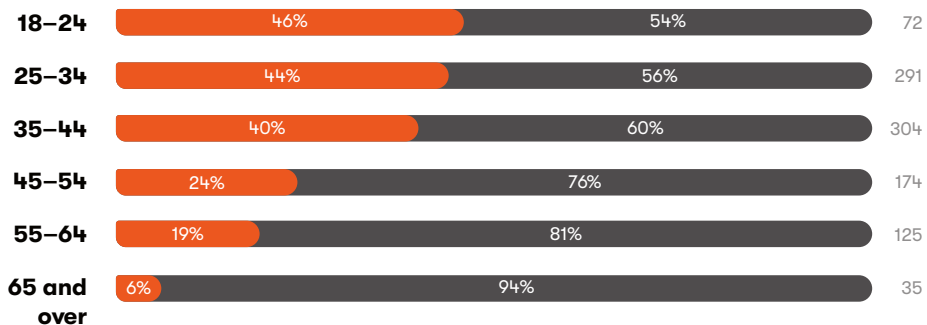


N = 1,001 respondents

The fifth question was aimed at discovering how much experience with headless CMSs the respondents had. **More than one third (35%) stated they'd used a headless content management system before.**



As in [Question 1](#), there is a clear correlation between the age and experience of the respondents. Since headless content management is a relatively new trend, it's no surprise that older age groups had less experience working with a headless CMS.



The respondents' answer to this question determined how they were going to be asked to evaluate headless CMSs: those who said YES were going to do that **based on their previous experience** (see [Question 7](#)) and those who said NO **were given a short, objective text** describing what a headless CMS is (see [Question 8](#)). In addition to that, those who said YES were asked to select (or, if the product was not on the list, type in) the headless CMSs they've used in [Question 6](#).

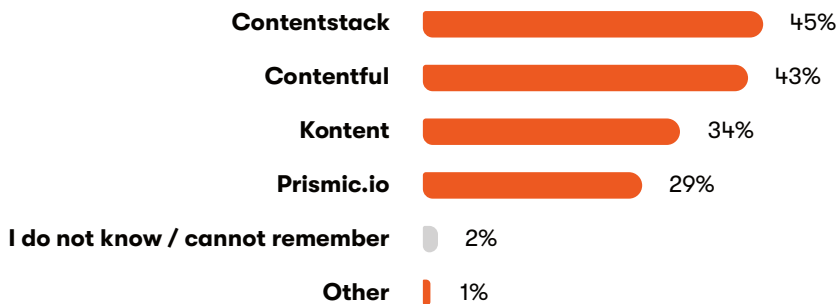
“Using the Kontent platform has virtually eliminated the conversation about technology stack with current and prospective clients. They can now select agencies fully on merit, rather than being limited to those that can support their chosen CMS’s technology stack. The Kontent team are always very helpful and work with us to provide solutions for our client challenges. The speed of the platform development has been impressive, and it’s great to see new features added regularly.”



Niki Meredith.
General Manager at Isobar

6 Please, select all the headless CMS products you've ever used.

The respondents could choose more than one answer.



N = 350 respondents who've used a headless CMS

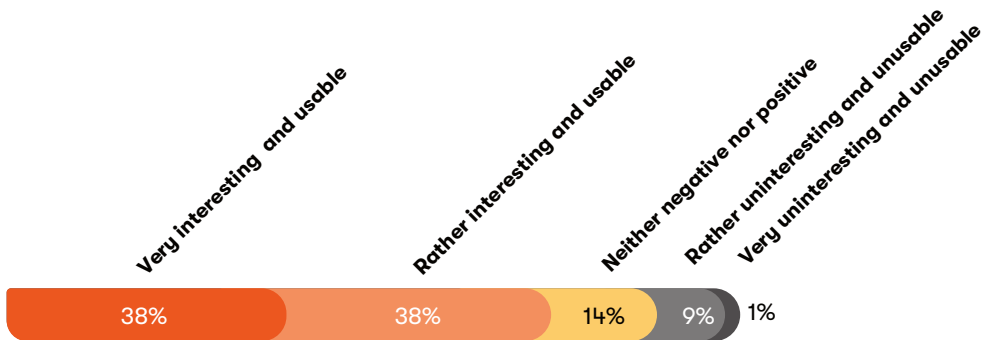
The most used headless CMSs seem to be Contentstack (45%), Contentful (43%), and Kentico Kontent (34%).

Try Kontent, it's the best one anyway.

START YOUR FREE TRIAL →

7 Based on your previous experience, how would you rate headless CMSs?

The respondents who said YES in [Question 5](#) used the scale below where 1 meant very interesting and usable, while 5 stood for very uninteresting and unusable.



N = 350 respondents who've used a headless CMS

The data shows that 76% of those who've tried working in a headless CMS rated it as very interesting and usable (37%) and rather interesting and usable (35%), which proves that **the benefits outweigh the downsides** (see [Question 3](#) and [Question 4](#)) and **that users are generally very satisfied with headless CMSs.**

“ More clients are coming to us needing headless because they want a best-of-breed tech stack and need to surface content across multiple sites and channels.

However, the web-centric side of them worries about the lack of “out-of-the-box” front-end components that WYSIWYG editors traditionally provided. In response, UserCentric created a React component library and design system for use with Kontent (we call it “React Rocket”) that can be tailored for any client, and we’ve used it across FMCG, Government, and Financial Services clients.

Clients have loved the idea of getting the benefits of headless while not having to start from scratch on the web application.”



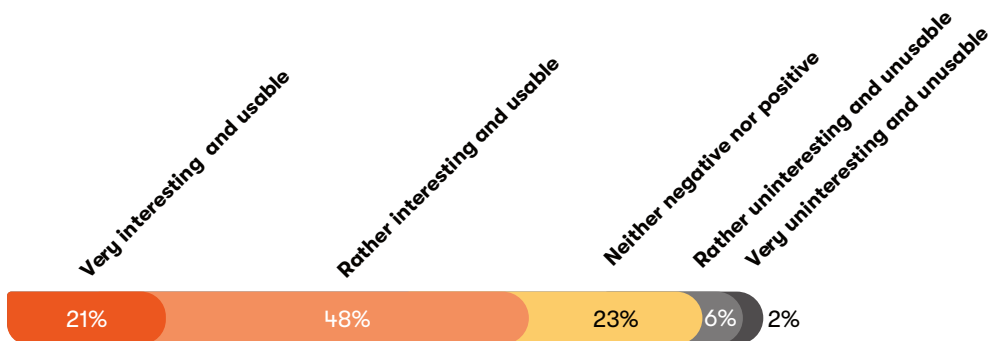
Kristian Tasevski.
Director of Technology at UserCentric

8 Based on this description, how would you rate headless CMSs?

You said you had never used a headless CMS. Here is a brief description of what a headless CMS is:

Traditional content management systems were built for websites only. However, people have started consuming content on many different channels and devices. The term “headless” means that the “head” (the front end, e.g., a web page) is separated from the “body” (the back end, e.g., the content repository). Headless CMSs, therefore, make the presentation layer more flexible as they eliminate the front-end part.

The respondents who said NO in [Question 5](#) used the scale below where 1 meant very interesting and usable, while 5 stood for very uninteresting and unusable.



N = 651 respondents who've never used a headless CMS

The other group (651 respondents), who claimed they'd never tried working in a headless CMS, was asked to rate headless CMSs based on a short, objective text describing how this type of CMS works.

Surprisingly, it seems that **the idea of using a headless CMS is much less appealing than the reality of it**—while a lot of users (37%) rated headless CMSs as highly interesting and usable (see [Question 7](#)), only 21% of those who were rating based on the description did.

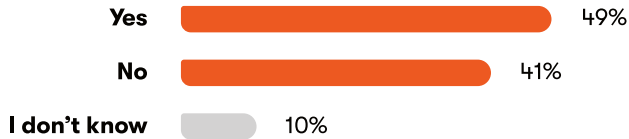
“ A headless approach to content allows us to build the innovative, flexible, and future-proof applications that our clients and their users want. It allows us to select best-in-class tools for every facet of an application. As a technology agency, that’s really important to us. Even in large, complex builds, headless, and Kentico Kontent in particular, have proven to be fast and responsive. We’re at the stage now where we’re more likely to need reasons not to go headless, rather than the other way around.”



Olly Percival.
Head of Partnerships at Kyan

9 Do you use microservices to build your applications?

The respondents could choose only one answer.



N = 1,001 respondents

Since half of the respondents were marketers, it was likely that a lot of them had never heard of microservices. However, only 10% stated they had no idea whether their company was using microservices or not.

This data (49% of the respondents using microservices) proves that more and more companies are moving **from monolithic solutions to microservices**.

Conclusion.

Enterprises are now trying to reach their customers on every channel and transforming their websites and apps into engaging online experiences, which is something they wouldn't be able to do with a traditional CMS platform. That's where **the headless CMS comes in to save the day.**

Although switching to a headless CMS requires a significant change in mindset, the results of our survey show that **a lot of practitioners have already got used to headless content management**—76% of marketers and developers who've used a headless CMS liked the experience. In addition to that, 32% of those who know the term consider themselves to be either experts or well informed in that area.

Our survey showed that headless CMS users appreciate its flexibility in using any front-end framework, easy upgrades, integrations with any systems of their choice, structured content, and the ability to deliver their content to any channel. The benefits are numerous, and there's no doubt that **the number of leading companies going headless will only increase.** Moreover, with add-ons such as Kontent's [Web Spotlight](#) that help visualize how different parts of your website come together, content creation on a headless platform has never been easier.

Let us know what you think, and thank you for downloading this report! We're already looking forward to analyzing the headless CMS market in 2021 :).

Overview of our respondents.



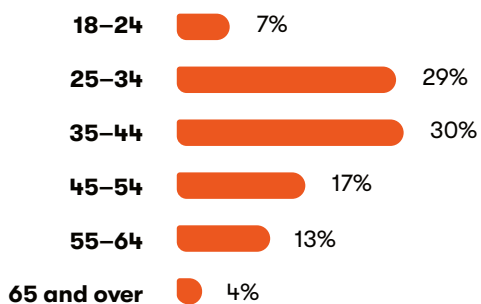
Country



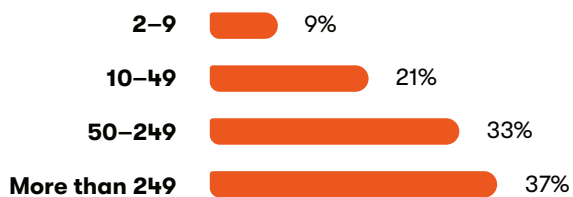
Gender



Age



Company size (employees)



N = 1,001 respondents (470 marketers, 531 developers)

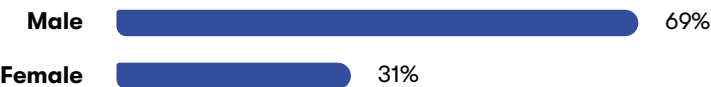


Developers

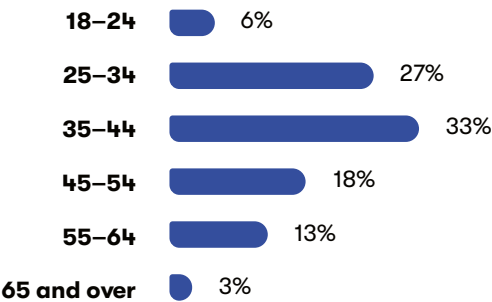
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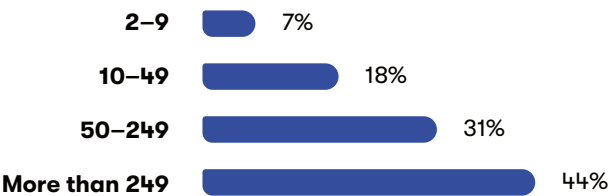
Gender



Age



Company size (employees)



Marketers

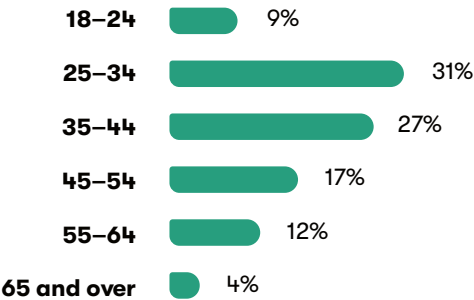
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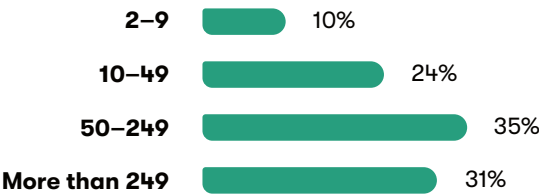
Gender



Age



Company size (employees)

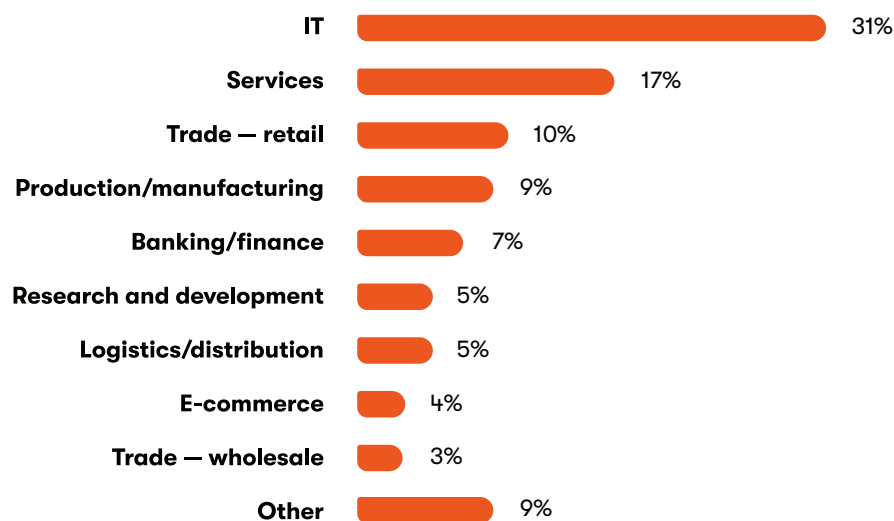


Job title



N = 1001, all respondents

Industry



N = 1001, all respondents



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