

# Trends in CMS

Redefining the key requirements  
of today's content management system

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# The invisible CMS

**The physical footprint of the newsroom CMS has changed radically in the last few years. At the same time, its role in driving productivity and innovation in the news operation has never been more important.**

Not long ago most CMS users could visualise their workspace as being physically located in the server stacks behind the newsroom.

Nowadays many of them would find it harder to say where or what it was.

Two developments have driven this disappearance – one accidental, the other part of a wider trend.

## Exodus of the editorial staff

The first was the rush to remote working that followed the onset of the pandemic early last year. CMS suppliers like Eidosmedia suddenly found massive demand for their mobile-deployable client apps as newsrooms emptied from Canada to Asia-Pacific (1).

Many of those news teams are still in remote working mode. As one of the responses to this survey indicates, a majority of respondents expect more than half their staff to continue to work outside the newsroom in the future.

## Recreating collaborative space

The experience was an acid test for remote working solutions: in particular, it showed the vital importance of effective planning and collaborating tools.

It turns out that there are features of the physical office environment that remote working apps often struggle to reproduce.

One of these is the effortless collaboration between teams, the easy sharing of screens and paper documents, casual chats and shouts across the office.

Deprived of these informal channels, remote working risks becoming an isolating, disjointed process. Chats and emails fail to provide the “glue” that efficient teamwork requires.

**“... a remote workspace that replicates the effectiveness of a well-managed newsroom or office”**

When whole teams ejected from the newsroom began using Eidosmedia Swing remote working apps, the value of the shared planning space and teamwork channels became apparent: each team member has their tasks and materials at their fingertips. The progress and state of play of each item and news product is immediately visible.

## The ideal distributed CMS

Adopting these tools, users of Swing remote apps found themselves working in something approaching the ideal distributed CMS: a remote workspace that replicates the effectiveness of a well-managed newsroom or office.

## Exodus of the infrastructure

The second development involved the physical hosting of the CMS. That, too, has moved out of the newsroom into an imprecisely located “cloud.”

Over half of Eidosmedia's customers have taken this step so far and most of the rest plan to do so shortly (2).

Behind the migration lie a number of factors from cost savings (estimated at between 20% and 40%) to enhanced security and disaster recovery (major concerns for many users at the moment).

## Easing innovation

But another response from the survey points to an even more important long-term benefit: nearly half the respondents identified their biggest CMS challenge as “Implementation of new features takes too long and impacts our go-to-market.”

Local CMS deployments tend to lag behind new product releases because users are understandably reluctant to face the disruption that a local upgrade may entail.

A cloud deployment, on the other hand, can be updated constantly and invisibly in the background, ensuring that the operation benefits from the latest features and enhancements without impacting everyday operations.

## A testbed for new tools

Another important benefit of a cloud-based CMS is the possibility of using it as a testbed for innovation.

Many innovative tools (often themselves cloud-based) are becoming available to journalists and editorial staff (3). A lot of them make use of the power of artificial intelligence and machine learning, not to replace the work of authors and editors, but to make it more productive by taking care of repetitive and routine tasks.

A cloud-hosted platform provides a risk-free environment where innovative tools can be tried out and quickly integrated or discarded, without interfering with day-to-day operations.

**“... a risk-free environment where innovative tools can be tried out and quickly integrated or discarded”**

## AI-assisted editorial and layout

Examples of such tools currently being integrated into Eidosmedia’s platforms include automatic tagging of stories and images, auto-generation of summaries and powerful semantic search functions.

For print editions, AI-guided creation of page layouts is a promising area, while intelligent analysis of reader behaviour and preferences can enhance the important process of content monetisation and subscription management.

By allowing the interactions between readers and content to be analysed and optimised, the AI-enabled CMS can make a decisive contribution to the productivity and sustainability of the whole news operation.

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## References

1. [Global newsrooms stay connected with Swing](#) – Eidosmedia Press release, 15 April 2020
2. [SaaS and Managed Services with Eidosmedia](#) – Eidosmedia E-book, October 2020
3. [Augmented journalism and the newsroom of the future](#) – Eidosmedia blog post, May 2021



**World Association  
of News Publishers**

## **Trends in CMS – Redefining the key requirements of today's content management system**

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## About the report

# Where does your CMS strategy stand?

**I give up. Just when I thought I had a decent grip on gauging a market's, region's or company's digital readiness in the larger picture of transformation, I learn about a publisher from X market that is way ahead of (or behind) the curve.**

Regardless, I am fairly certain that those who are ahead of the curve likely have sound technology platforms, particularly a robust CMS. If they don't, they are very likely looking to invest in one. In fact, in our survey for this report (spring 2021), nearly 50 percent of respondents said they were currently looking to invest.

And investing in a CMS is never an easy affair, especially considering all the demands on newsrooms today, staff, and their systems. They need to be robust and secure enough for remote work, ease of integration with (increasingly more) data tools, CRM, content monetisation, social, etc., have lightning speed, flexibility, seamless output across multimedia, superb UX, a great supplier partner, and the list goes on and on.

So that is why we wanted to simply ask newsroom editors, their IT and tech colleagues just what makes up the basic ingredients for today's modern CMS, also with an eye toward a digital subscription strategy. Nearly 80 respondents from 30 countries shared their insights for the report.

Luc Rademakers, an industry specialist in newsroom organisation and systems, gave us his take on the survey findings and the overall picture for the considerations a

publisher should ponder when investing today. We also highlight a handful of interesting case studies of recent investments and collaborations.

This report would not be possible without the generous support from our partner Eidosmedia, which by the way has a great overview of "The invisible CMS" on page 4 (in case you missed it).

WAN-IFRA held a CMS Solutions Day this past June on the eve of the annual Newsroom Summit, and will do so again next year on 26 April. Be sure to tune into the event, it's a perfect opportunity to catch up on what newsrooms are doing with their CMS strategies and to hear from some of the suppliers in this arena. Much of this report was built from the input from that event. A list of our member suppliers that are active in CMS solutions can be found on page 27.

If you have made a recent implementation of a CMS and are willing to share your story, please get in touch with us.

### Dean Roper

Director of Insights  
WAN-IFRA

# Key takeaways of this report

- **CMS takes on new importance:** There is a paradigm shift in the expectations of today's CMS, in how it can and should create added value for a media company that wants to accelerate its digital transformation. Quite simply, the investment is a broader strategic decision than ever before.
- **The big expectations:** Generally speaking, the new expectations can be grouped into three categories: greater speed and agility (to develop, test, deliver new products and content formats), more intelligence (to harness the increasing data capabilities to deliver more, increasingly AI-driven, personalised content), and a better UX (because today's consumers' best user experience, whether that be Spotify or Netflix, will be their expectation of your products).
- **The search is on:** Nearly 50% of the respondents to our survey said they were currently looking to invest in a CMS. Why? Mostly they don't think their current solutions are flexible or fast enough to keep up with today's demands.
- **Headless? Decoupled? Invisible?** Whatever you want to call it, the traditional coupled CMS, valued for its robustness and constancy, is gradually losing ground to the more agile forms of headless (a back-end only system) and decoupled (separating content management applications and content delivery applications) CMS platforms.
- **Built-in agility and flexibility at a premium:** With publishers and newsrooms trying to embrace the new culture of testing, deciding whether to develop and/or integrate new tools, while constantly evaluating, upgrading or discarding, this requires a high degree of flexibility in the architecture. 60% of respondents to our survey said agility is a core need of any CMS today.
- **The Pandemic Effect – remote work capabilities:** When asked how many employees will work remotely after the pandemic, one in four in our survey answered that **at least 75% will work remotely**. Indeed, the CMS of the future must facilitate that and other behavioural changes.
- **The Pandemic Effect – digital subscriptions:** 66% of respondents said that the trend towards digital subscriptions during the pandemic has changed their expectations of a CMS.
- **The paid content components:** When asked about specific needs in order to execute and improve their paid-content strategy, respondents indicated four priorities (related to a CMS): a recommendation engine (important for 71% of respondents), newsletter functionality (66%), automated tagging (61%) and news alerts (61%) (see also the graphic on page 9). About half cited integration of payment systems.
- **Integration functionalities:** Nearly 66% of respondents said new content formats (audio, video, newsletters) top their wishlist of which new integration functionalities they would like to take to the next level, followed by payment systems (51%).
- **Power in partnerships:** Publishers are increasingly partnering with other publishers, even competitors, to jointly invest and/or develop CMSs, as reported in our case studies.
- **The digital driver:** The case studies featured here also show that newsrooms invest in a CMS to jump-start or accelerate their digital-first or audiences-first strategies and mindsets. And the pandemic certainly left some with no choice as they deployed new systems in the middle of the crisis.

## Introduction

# CMS' value proposition climbs the publishing ladder

The pandemic has served as a stress test for publishers and newsrooms on many fronts. For example, where do they stand on their digital transformation journey? How can they produce quality content remotely (the decentralised newsroom)? How should they tweak (or start) their paid-content strategies? It has also served as a good gauge of how their content management systems can – or cannot – help advance or manage all of the above.

For many newsrooms it remains a struggle to implant a digital-first culture in the minds of staff when, let's face it, many of their strategies, contents and products still revolve around print – which, by the way, still brings in most of the revenue. But **the pandemic laid bare those publishers and newsrooms that are digital- and audiences-first ready** – and those that are not.

**A key tool in any newsroom's operation is its CMS.** The right choice and optimal implementation of a modern CMS can go a long way to help make the cultural shift necessary to meet your audiences' demands.

But what is required of a CMS today?

The publishing landscape is constantly changing, making it essential to choose a solution that can respond effectively to new opportunities, and even anticipate them. A CMS investment is always significant in terms of both time and money but has implications far beyond the purchase of the system itself.

Indeed, **the selection of a CMS has become a strategy-related move**, rather than just a joint IT/editorial decision. That reflects the current trends in newsroom organisation: embedded in the newsroom are data teams, audience engagement teams, social media, and audio/video. In addition, marketing and commercial teams

## Key features needed for a paid content strategy



work more closely with editorial than ever before, thanks in large part to **paid content strategies**. So there is more at stake today.

With that in mind, many publishers involve numerous departments in the selection process. At Nederlands Dagblad, an independent niche newspaper publisher in the Netherlands, ICT Manager Jaap Meijer said, “From the outset, we brought each department internally involved on board, which is important to increase the robustness of the selection and the implementation of the CMS.”

### From coupled to uncoupled or headless

With content like newsletters, audio, video, and so on under constant development, it is becoming **essential that a CMS have both a solid, service-oriented architecture at the back end and flexible management at the front end** to serve media consumers in their demand for more personalised offerings.

**The need for flexibility is driving the current trend toward so-called “decoupled” and “headless” CMSs**, away from traditional “coupled” systems. In a coupled CMS, the content is created, stored and managed in an integrated system. For the editors, it is easy to use: you see what you get.

A decoupled CMS, as the term indicates, has a back end for content creation and storage that is more or less separate from the front end, which can present the content in a variety of ways. Still, the back end ultimately determines what is possible at the front end. **The two components**

**talk to one another via APIs** (application programming interfaces).

A decoupled CMS delivers raw and formatted content to any front-end environment. You still have templates that users must adhere to, but you get more flexibility. The separation of back end from front end facilitates output to multiple channels and platforms.

The back end and front end must communicate well to ensure that the newsroom’s operations run smoothly and efficiently. A good API can make a big difference daily.

**A true headless CMS is built from the outset as an API-first CMS**, rather than enabling APIs to be attached later via extensions or plug-ins. Such a system is suitable for personalisation and reader engagement via multiple channels.

No defined front-end system is offered; there are no pages or web site-maps, and there is no presentation functionality. Content is organised in its pure form, and is distributed only on demand to any given device or channel by means of an API.

Because a headless CMS can make content available to pretty much all platforms and devices, each with its own design, **the concept is rapidly gaining traction with publishers**.

“We are moving toward a so-called headless CMS,” says Koen Vandaele, CIO of Mediahuis Group in Belgium. “The CMS, with a strong ecosystem of content management, provides a set of APIs that we can tap into to build the front end ourselves, according to our own needs and different brands.”

### Key requirements: agility and paid content

To sum up, the CMSs currently on the market can be categorised primarily by the degree of flexibility each one offers at the back and front ends. Thus it is not surprising that in our survey, **agility was the most frequently cited requirement of a CMS**, being mentioned by 60% of respondents (see graphic on page 13).

**Closely following it were requirements related to paid content**, such as paywall opportunities and content monetisation, and, to fulfill those needs, **prioritising digital output**. Those three requirements were cited as being very important by one in two respondents.

**So the trend toward charging for online content plays a significant role in evaluations of CMSs**. A detailed look at the survey results, in fact, reveals great interest in how a CMS can help in developing new and better models that satisfy a reader’s willingness to pay for content.

Ulrich Kutsch, Chief Digital Officer of Medienhaus Aachen, Germany, says, “Offering subscriptions based on readers’ needs is the next step we are going to implement. We can focus on core users, on those who are promising in terms of subscriptions.”

Regarding specific features sought by survey respondents, **71% said a well-performing recommendation engine was the most important feature they needed moving forward**. Other features frequently mentioned were newsletter functionality (66%), automated tagging (61%), news alerts (61%), and audio/podcasting (41%).

# Survey highlights the specs for today's modern CMS

The results of a WAN-IFRA global survey show that not only are many newsrooms currently considering to invest in a new CMS but because of the ramifications of the pandemic and the trend to paid content strategies, their expectations of a new 'system' also have shifted.

The survey was conducted in April, when the pandemic was raging in many parts of the world. The effects on media consumption patterns, advertising revenues and publishing operations were in many cases dramatic. Enforced remote work of employees, falling ad revenue, and the mushrooming proportion of media consumption digitally have caused publishers to move certain specific capabilities to the top of the list when they compile CMS specifications, the survey results show.

## Remote work

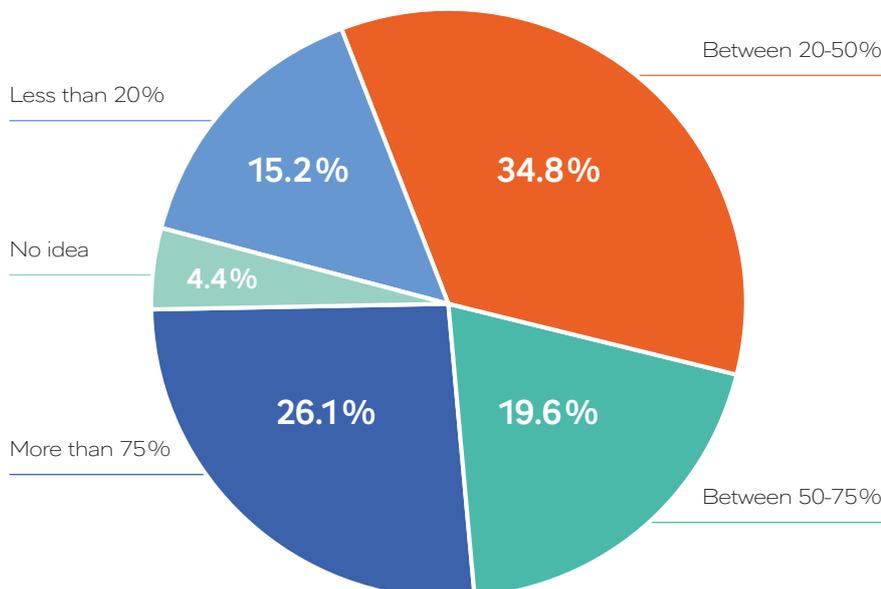
Unlike many other legacy industries, media companies have a tradition of remote work, including both distributed and truly mobile operations – and, in both the input and output processes. Thus the requirement to work remotely during the pandemic did not cause a major culture shock in most media companies, especially those that already had a geographical spread of activities beforehand.

However, some traditions, such as the classical in-person editorial meetings, were subjected to serious examination. Today, it's easy to imagine a future when those meetings could take place more often in a hybrid form.

When asked how many employees will work remotely after the pandemic, one in four in our survey answered that **at least 75% will work remotely**. Indeed, the CMS of the future must facilitate that and other behavioural changes. Increasingly, assignments, collaborations, meetings, and training will shift from taking place in-person to online, survey respondents indicated.

## The impact of remote working on workflow

What percentage of your employees will work remotely after the pandemic?



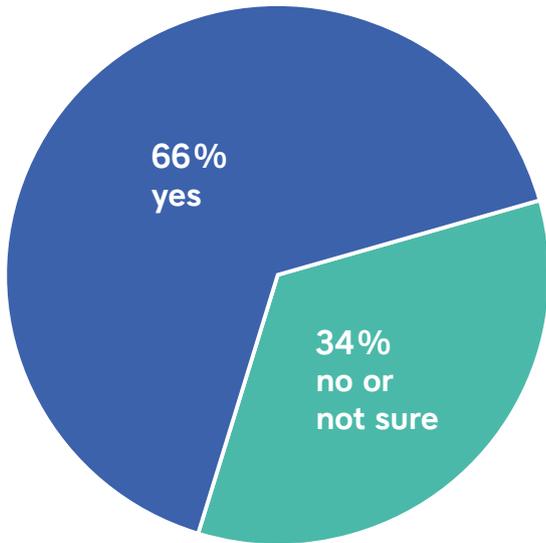
## Digital consumption of news accelerated

During the pandemic, distribution of print media came under great pressure. Some distribution points were temporarily closed, and in some cases readers' movements were restricted, effectively preventing them from purchasing printed products.

With lockdowns and people working from home, a by-product of that was digital news consumption accelerated, as did people's willingness to

## Post-pandemic expectations for a CMS

Has the increasing trend towards digital subscriptions during the pandemic changed your expectations for a CMS ?

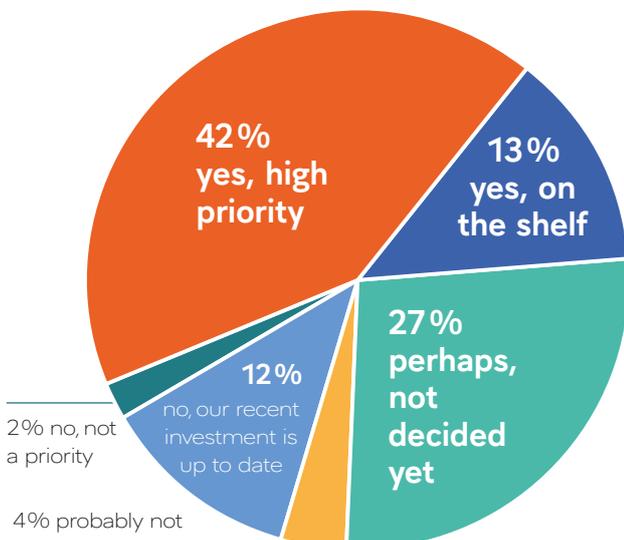


pay for online news. Almost 70% of the respondents in our survey indicated that the increasing **trend towards digital subscriptions during the pandemic changed their expectations of their CMSs.**

Generally speaking, **the new expectations** can be grouped into three categories: **greater speed, more intelligence, and a better UX.**

Key considerations for a new CMS include intelligence criteria such as the ability to better identify content that creates loyalty and retention, new product opportunities, and relevant data insights.

## Currently looking to invest in some aspect of CMS?



The CMS then becomes part of an intelligent data warehouse. More and more media companies are deliberately evolving into data-driven enterprises to gain value-driven insights into their audiences, and to increasingly deliver **personalised experiences and content** to users who also increasingly expect that.

“They are expecting to be participatory, to have the next level of personalisation, and above all, convenience,” Adam Bird, Senior Partner and the Global Leader of McKinsey’s Consumer Tech & Media practice, said during WAN-IFRA’s World News Media Congress. “It is pretty clear why that is relevant to the media industry because **a user’s best consumer experience**, regardless if that is in media or a particularly good payments app, **becomes his or her standard for what they expect from you** (and your products).”

With that sort of pressure, **newsrooms need to be able to rely on a CMS** that helps to facilitate that level of engagement and UX. Algorithm-powered content recommendations, combined with various publication possibilities on different channels and devices, are needed to create an optimal personalised offer.

Demands for workflow optimisation, highlighting of added value, and an AI-based planning tool indicate growing concern for a good user experience internally. Sharing the most important KPIs and providing only data that really makes a difference in journalists’ roles are considered important, according to the survey results.

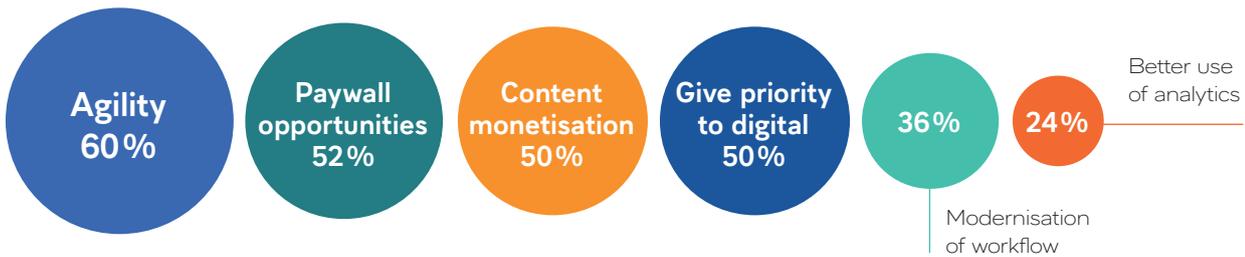
These new expectations are not in themselves spectacular or unusual, but their strongly stated formulation and urgency are new. Thanks to the pandemic, **priorities that had been dwelling under the surface have suddenly moved much higher up the agenda.**

The main pain points respondents cited (see page 14) include an inefficient current CMS, difficulty in implementing new features, insufficient integration, and an overly complex interface for users in the media company.

## Impact on the entire business

More than half of the survey respondents are currently in the selection phase for a new CMS. **Only 2% indicated that a CMS is not a priority at the moment.** What is also new is that the process of selecting a CMS is no longer the sole responsibility of a single department, as in the past. Awareness has grown that **a CMS choice has a decisive impact on virtually the entire business.**

## Most mentioned needs towards a CMS



After an internal assessment of must-haves and nice-to-haves, of budgets and of skills, **multidisciplinary teams** now map out the shortcomings and needs. After all, a CMS has a widespread influence on work processes, content production, human-resources issues, financial benefits, data policy, and paywall choices.

Among the needs cited most often by the respondents were agility (60%), paywall opportunities (52%), content monetisation (50%), prioritization of digital publication, workflow modernisation, and better use of analytics.

Because the choice of a CMS is increasingly becoming part of a company's strategy, it is of course advisable to have **a carefully compiled set of strategic priorities in place before proceeding to a CMS requirements list**. In reality, most media companies create those two lists simultaneously. The feature list functions almost as a practical translation of the route the company intends to take.

Almost all of the essential features that new technology offers have a company-wide impact, in order of importance:

- testing, developing and valuing content as an integrated process;
- implementing cloud solutions;
- seamless workspace to access all resources;
- operation in remote mode;
- iterative development culture;
- connecting databases across industry boundaries;
- end-to-end client relationship; and
- protection against cyber attacks

## Paid content

When asked about specific needs in order to execute and improve their paid-content strategy, respondents indicated four priorities: a recommendation engine (important for 71% of respondents), newsletter functionality (66%), automated tagging (61%) and news alerts (61%) (see also graphic on page 9). About half cited integration of payment systems.

## Machine learning

There is a growing awareness that we are only at the beginning of automating editorial processes. Automatic tagging, associated recommendations, automated content integration and enrichment, voice search and chatbot features not only make editorial production more effective and efficient, the decision-making process will also be much faster, more objective and more reliable.

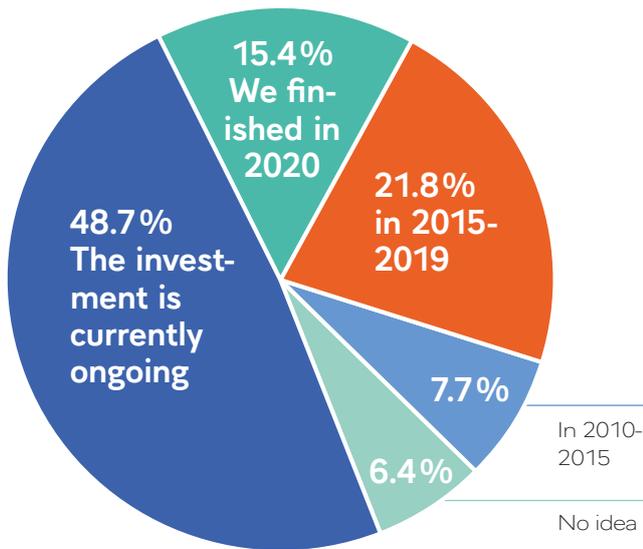
Newsrooms have entered an innovation race with global players. From content creation to subscription management, there is a need to embrace new opportunities. Reaching out to existing and new audiences on different channels, starting from optimal use of a multifunctional CMS platform, is the top priority for publishers this decade.

## Paradigm shift

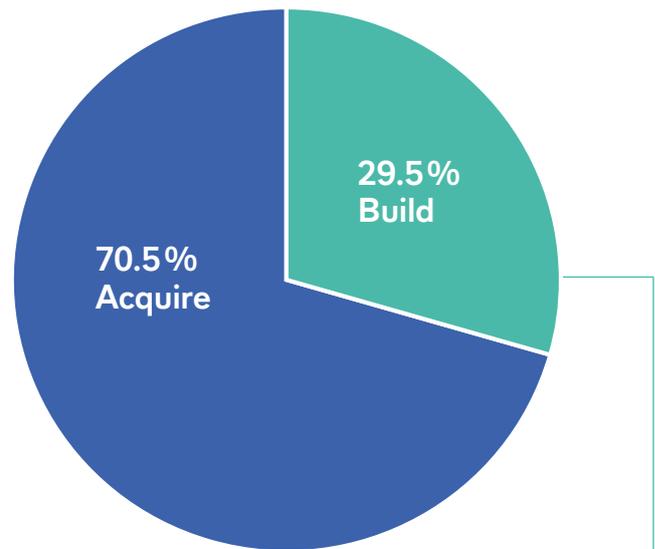
The expectations of how a CMS can and should create added value for a media enterprise that wants to accelerate its digital transformation are indeed in the midst of a paradigm shift.

On the following pages, newsrooms demonstrate just how that shift is going.

### When did you make your most recent major investment in your CMS?



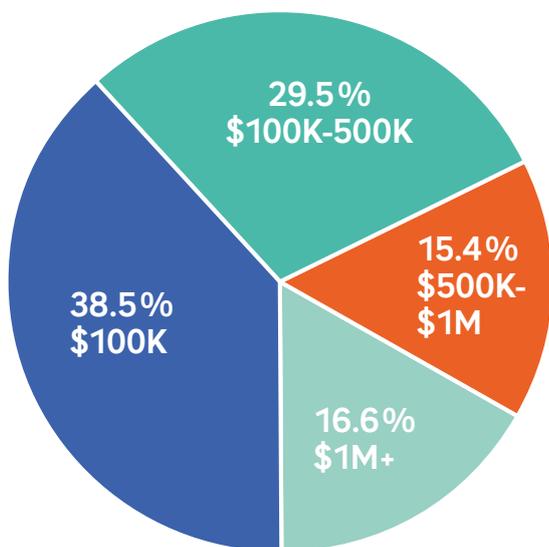
### Which of the following approaches best describe your CMS technology strategy?



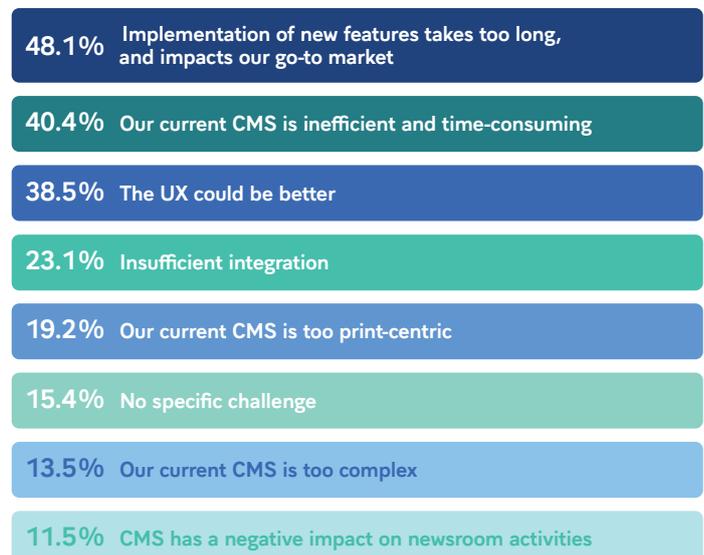
### If Build, why?



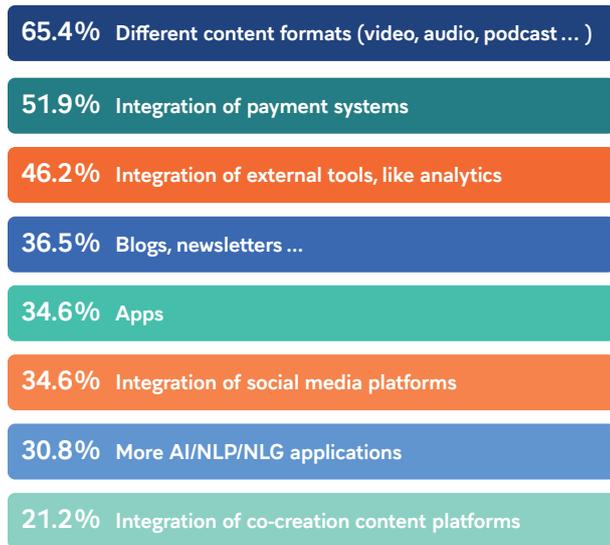
### What is your CMS budget?



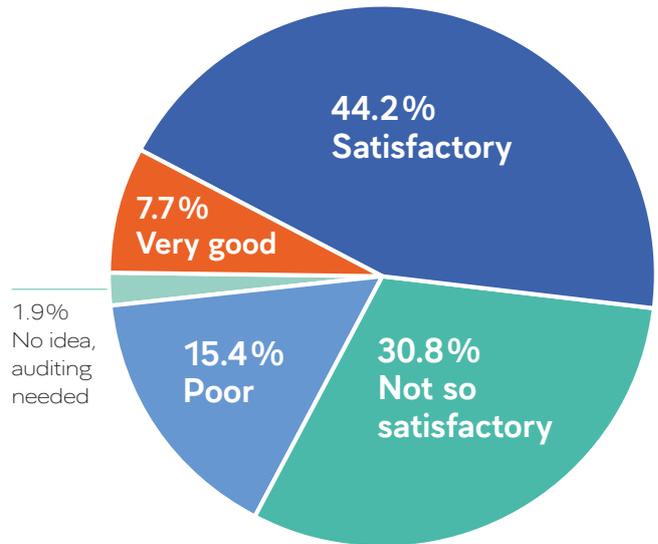
### What are the main challenges you are currently facing?



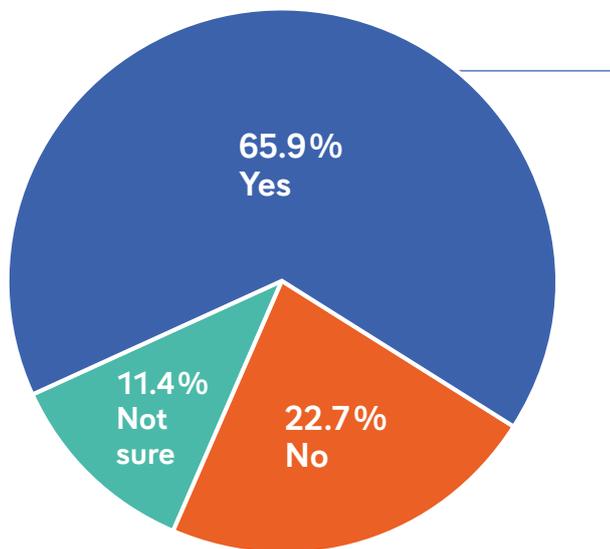
### Which integration functionalities do you want to take to the next level?



### How would you rate your current CMS platforms in terms of supporting and serving your reader revenue strategy?



### Has the increasing trend towards digital subscriptions, especially during the pandemic, changed your expectations for a CMS?



### If Yes, what are some of those key considerations or expectations?



# Buying better together – the benefits of joint CMS procurement

As publishing houses increasingly see the benefits, even need for cooperation, the cost and complexity of CMS choice and development makes a clear case for collaboration and joint purchasing. That is exactly what Medienhaus Aachen did with the Rheinische Post and a handful of other German regional publishers in the last few years.

Back in October 2013 at the WAN-IFRA World Publishing Expo in Berlin, Ulrich Kutsch, Chief Digital Officer (CDO) of Medienhaus Aachen and Sebastian Brinkmann, Director Publishing Services of Rheinische Post, were among the publishing professionals there considering a new CMS. But they weren't doing so in isolation ...

## Stronger together

Investing in a CMS is already a complex enough affair. As Kutsch puts it; "If you look at everything we spend on systems, I would say the CMS is the biggest single part." So throwing a number of different publishers of varying sizes and goals to jointly procure a CMS might seem counterintuitive as it brings its own set of unique challenges.

But despite some wish lists varying, the publishers on board (Rheinische Post, Saarbrücker Zeitung, Trierischer Volksfreund, Lausitzer Rundschau, and Aachener Zeitung/Nachrichten) shared one common denominator: "We wanted to find a CMS for print AND online with ONE GUI (graphical user interface) as we believed that this will make the transformation (for everybody involved) easier," said Brinkmann, who was the lead on the overall consortium project.

Ultimately, **one obvious common denominator was the cost savings of doing this jointly**, but also the knock-on benefits of shared experiences, know-how and resources. A simple idea: **publishers pool human resources and share specialist insights**. "I think that we were able to get different people in this project with different skills and different ideas who worked together to create a great CMS," recalls Brinkmann.

Kutsch: "Of course we did it to save money, for the production process and to exchange content, but also for us, because we are relatively small compared to the Rheinische Post, we profit significantly from their experience in SEO and programming, for example."

Pooling those resources especially paid off in the selection phase. "A group of people from the different editorial houses, technical people, and editorial people spent several years investigating different CMS and conducting a really, really deep dive into the market," said Kutsch. From Medienhaus Aachen's side, he said that meant a small team of decision-makers: Kutsch, the IT leader, and a colleague from the print department.

The transformation Brinkmann referred to earlier was a crucial point for Medienhaus Aachen, Kutsch said. The new CMS had to help move the paper's newsrooms to more **digital-first workflows** and free up the editorial team to focus all its energy on **creating quality content** – also as a part of its **digital paid content strategy**.

## The group selection in practice

Mutual decision-making meant managing the process and Kutsch recalls that there were “about 10 presentations and a lot of workshops where we all came together and we put in all our needs from print and online.” Again, not everybody has the same requirements either and inevitably **that involves being mindful of the different needs and priorities.**

As Brinkmann puts it; “One of the biggest challenges was to define the needs for the websites, as RP Online is far bigger than the other sites. RP Online makes around half the traffic of the whole CMS.”

That difference in scale leads to different priorities explains Kutsch; “Of course on the one side, you have the Rheinische Post which is the big player with big money and focus on reach and advertising. On the other side, the publishing houses which are smaller, and, for example, we’re not so focused on programmatic advertising for the sake of two euros, that’s not our business – we’re too small. But for the Rheinische Post, that two euros would be 2,000 euros. So that leads to different points of view.”

## The ultimate choice

The discussions proved productive and the supplier they selected was InterRed. The implementation started in 2016, Brinkmann said, and the following year, the first website (Saarbrücker Zeitung) went live.

Crucial to the choice of CMS for Medienhaus was again the digital-first production capabilities, but also the ease of cross-media publishing within one system.

Kutsch said: “It is totally browser based. So even the layout of the production of the newspaper itself is done within the browser. This proved great for us in the time of COVID because we didn’t have to install fat clients on notebooks for home workers – they just work with remote access in a web browser. The second point is we are totally working within one system. MediaSync offers different versions of the article for different publishing channels within one system. You can jump between them, follow modifications, and see if a mistake is corrected in both print and online versions. When you have the two versions within one system, linked together, you can produce the one from the other, that really helped us to get it into the [minds of] editorial staff. Now every article is written as the online version. Which means you can look at digital subscriptions, and new business models.”

“Of course we did it to save money, for the production process and to exchange content, but also for us, because we are relatively small compared to the Rheinische Post, we profit significantly from their experience in SEO and programming, for example.”

**Ulrich Kutsch**  
Chief Digital Officer (CDO),  
Medienhaus Aachen





The German consortium of publishers visited the World Publishing Expo in Berlin in 2013 as a crucial part of its investigation and journey for a new CMS.

For all participating publishers, the system is now integrated with the content monetisation platform CeleraOne, said Kutsch. Medienhaus Aachen has had a freemium paywall since 2012, but Kutsch said only recently with a bigger push to digital has **its digital subscription strategy started to ramp up**. The paper has about 3,500 digital-only subscriptions (as of this summer). But the CMS and CeleraOne are reasons for optimism.

“Yes. It’s a step-by-step process,” said Kutsch. “First, we have to produce the right content, then with CeleraOne, we can analyze what the reader wants to read, then offer a subscription offer based on their needs. We can say ‘hey,

we have the local sports team. You read a lot of sports news, here we have the subscription for you.’ That’s the next step we are going to implement now.”

### Basic group ground rules for ongoing development

Kutsch said the different product owners from the respective titles (one print and one online staff plus the project management lead of the consortium) meet regularly, as often as once a week to discuss different developments. An example, he said, is if there is a specific request:

- the group decides if the new feature is technically possible;
- then defines a “Jira ticket”;
- then discusses that request in the weekly meeting;
- get a cost estimate;
- then decide, based on who wants the feature and if it is worth the price;
- if they reach a quorum, the realization of the request goes on the general budget;
- if not, the costs are split among the titles who want to use the feature.

All in all, it is clear in talking with both that despite any challenges in such a cooperation, it was the right choice and the CMS and newsrooms are thriving.

### In summary...

- Regional publishers Medienhaus Aachen and Rheinische Post formed a consortium with five other publishers to jointly procure a new CMS.
- Cost savings and the ability to pool resources and know-how to implement and develop the CMS were key reasons for the group-wide effort.
- The goal was to implement a browser-based CMS that helped drive each publisher’s print and digital strategies.

## Case Study: Mediahuis

# Mediahuis targets a CMS to match its big ambitions

It's no secret that the Mediahuis media group has expanded its footprint well beyond its historical headquarters in Belgium in the last years. Just a glance at that timeline on the opposite page gives a glimpse into the rapid development of the group – begging the question: what's next? For Koen Vandaele, Chief Information Officer at Mediahuis, all those acquisitions and myriad systems that come with them present a significant challenge. So what is the ideal CMS strategy for such a dynamic situation? Here he shares his thoughts.

Vandaele says the group has two guiding principles: create economies of scale in order to reduce costs, and accelerate digital innovation.

“To that end we provide open group platforms, in both CMS and sales environments. With the many acquisitions over the past five years, we have inherited several CMS ecosystems,” he says, from almost all vendors active on the market. In addition, the company has developed systems and app solutions in-house.

### An evolution vs. a revolution

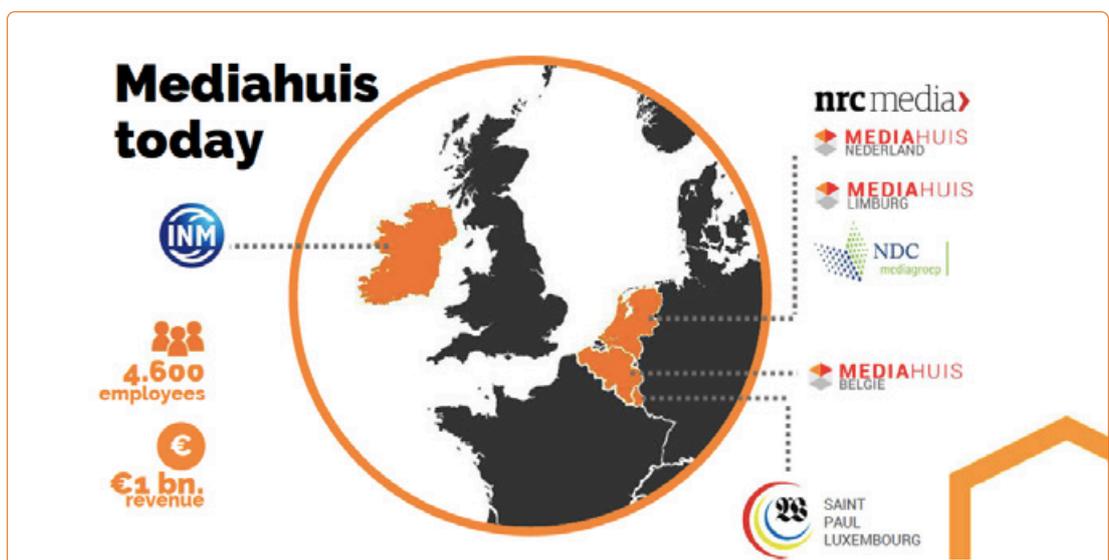
Vandaele's **biggest challenge is to properly integrate that plethora of environments.** “We have countless paywalls, countless subscription shops, identity and access management systems, and it is untenable to

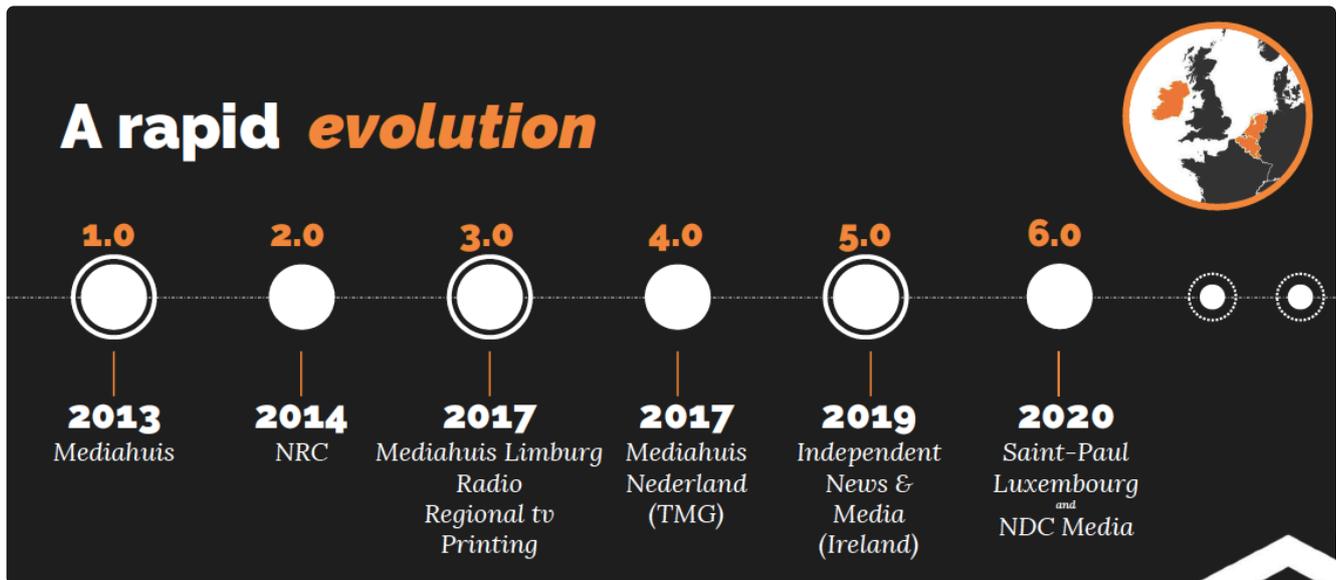
keep them all operational. **We are therefore moving towards one choice, one CMS.** That is an evolution, not a revolution,” he says. A **“greenfield” approach to building a new platform has been ruled out because day-to-day operations cannot be disrupted.**

The company has begun a major project to introduce a completely new CMS, bringing the whole process, from content creation and management to publishing and distribution, into one new ecosystem.

Vandaele asks, **“How far do you go in a CMS?** With us, it's from the journalist up to and including making content easy to search and find, editing it, enriching it with video, audio, podcast, metadata, including creating an open plan from where that content can be consumed.

Mediahuis owns national and regional media brands in Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, including De Telegraaf, NRC, and Het Nieuwsblad. It also owns the Irish Independent.





Indeed, since 2013 Mediahuis has grown rapidly through mergers and acquisitions, accumulating an array newsroom systems.

“On the front end, we look at it differently,” he says. **The company does not want to be tied to a single vendor** but insists on having the freedom to present content any way it sees fit. Formatting and design of websites and apps, including a certain degree of company-wide uniformity, is extremely important to branding and thus needs to be under the complete control of Mediahuis and its individual outlets, says Vandaele.

“The whole process of how to deal with content is changing,” he says. “We want a platform that very much facilitates that change, so a uniform digital production process is important.”

### In summary...

- At the time of this interview in the spring, Mediahuis was looking for a CMS to deploy across its group.
- The wish: a solution that can handle from content creation and management to publishing and distribution, into one ecosystem.
- The media group is leaning toward a “headless” CMS with a set of APIs to incorporate and control the front end.

### The right management platform

As far as building the management platform is concerned, he says, “There are very good suppliers on the market, with a lot of experience.” So Mediahuis is planning to purchase a system and is preparing a request for proposals. It will **evaluate the proposals based on factors such as digital functionality, flexibility, digital-first orientation, and pricing/licensing models.**

“It’s about an investment over 10 years, so we need some guarantees – but also an open ecosystem,” he says. “**We are moving toward a headless CMS**, with a strong ecosystem of content management, which provides a set of APIs that we can tap into to build the front end ourselves according to our own needs.”

Vandaele envisages the back end as running in the cloud but not being a cloud-native solution, while the front end is cloud-native.

Addressing his counterparts at other companies who are looking at CMSs, Vandaele urges, “Make sure you have your architecture in order. How do you want to work? What is your editorial process? How does your paywall fit in? And your asset management? How are you going to integrate with surrounding environments? Those are all questions that need to be answered.”

## Case Study: Le Parisien

# Le Parisien partners with French peers to hone CMS

On page 16, we presented the case of how regional publishers in Germany created a consortium to jointly invest in a CMS and roll out its development. In France, Le Parisien joined forces with a few competitors, also in Belgium, over the last couple of years to iron out some of the wrinkles in their respective investments in their CMS systems.

Laëtitia Tavoillot, Deputy CTO, and Marion Souzeau, head of digital tools at [Le Parisien](#) talk about their experience of rolling out the Arc XP CMS system. They touch on the choice of tools, the progressive roll out process, the human dimension, and the value of press partnerships when it comes to managing change.

With its Washington Post provenance, headless CMS approach, AWS (Amazon Web Services) tie in, and e-commerce platform, Arc has attracted a lot of attention since its launch a few years ago. But much of user examples are solidly anglo saxon. Le Parisien, meanwhile, has been spearheading adoption in the French-speaking world, in partnership with other French and Belgian media houses. Here's how...

### ... But first, what is #LeParisien200000?

In a WAN-IFRA webinar in September of 2020, Sophie Gourmelen, Managing Director and Publisher of Le Parisien, [shared](#) how the publisher's recently launched #LeParisien200000 digital transformation project was unfolding. **A specific goal there was to reach 200,000 digital subscribers in five years.** Another part of the overall transformation project was to invest and embrace new technology (and data). It's worth noting that Le Parisien also participated in the WAN-IFRA **Table Stakes Europe** programme in 2020.

During the previous year the title had **doubled both its numbers of digital subscribers and its revenues from digital subscriptions** largely through an effort to produce far more "premium" articles that are for subscribers only. The website now features a hybrid of metered and paywalled (premium) content.

**"It's a solution that lets us control the workflow in the newsroom; not just a CMS where articles are entered by the journalists but a complete package with photo management, articles, print, etc. and that was great."**

Laëtitia Tavoillot  
Deputy CTO,  
Le Parisien





**“Previously we had the newsroom writing for a specific platform, but there was a real desire to be web/print agnostic and leave it to the newsroom section heads to decide if content went to web or print.”**

Marion Souzeau  
Head of Digital Tools,  
Le Parisien

## All about digital-first

Like so many other newsrooms today, Tavoillot said Le Parisien has been challenged, also by its management, to **embrace a digital-first approach** and needed the right system to put the publisher on track, and give it the speed to do so. As a more recent entry into the CMS arena, and its inherent digital lineage, Le Parisien said Arc promised a gateway to that different approach. “It’s a solution that lets us control the workflow in the newsroom; not just a CMS where articles are entered by the journalists but a complete package with photo management, articles, print, etc. and that was great,” said Tavoillot.

“Previously we had the newsroom writing for a specific platform,” confirms Souzeau. “But there was a real desire to be web/print agnostic and leave it to the newsroom section heads to decide if content went to web or print.”

She continued by saying “think digital first” became the newsroom’s mantra and any CMS has to enable that as a platform.

## There’s power in partnerships

The Arc installation was a first in the francophone marketplace and Le Parisien quickly found itself in talks with other news groups as they mutually reached out to compare notes.

“We started to work with Libération who came to see us,” recalls Marion Souzeau, and when they decided to go with Arc, a kind of informal partnership came into being.

“We hadn’t yet begun our training schedule and Libération, with their more ambitious schedule, began training before us. But as we came up against many of the same problems, we continued to exchange. Perhaps not formally, but with points of contact around glitches. Then Médias IPM, owner of La Libre Belgique [one of the big two French language titles in Belgium], found they needed to train their teams (as well).”

**Many of the bumps in the road that the three papers were working to smooth out came from the move from one language to another.** “Originally the problems lay with a spellcheck system which wasn’t entirely suited, so we raised the issue.”

**In fact, the coming together of the three titles meant they jointly had more influence when it came to dealing with Arc. Any potential rivalry between the titles was put to one side** (they overlap little in target readership in any case) in the cause of sorting out shared concerns and increasing clout.

“The combined European/Franco-phone approach meant **we brought more weight to discussions and they learned a lot from us, too**, since really we were one of the first big newspaper installations after The Washington Post.”

The kind of changes required often revolved around the differences in typography from one language to another and while seemingly minor, were nonetheless potential stumbling blocks in practice.

For example, the word “speech mark” makes the Le Parisien parisiennes smile wryly since, while anglophones understand that to mean inverted commas, French speakers use a double chevron – “and the journalists weren’t about to change,” said Souzeau.

## Training and the human factor

Tools and tactics are only one part of the equation, and Le Parisien now had to deal with the human dimension of the implementation.

“Using one CMS or another realistically isn’t such a big change in itself,” says Tavoillot, clearly unfazed by the technical side of the move, “but the organisation ... well Marion had some 400 journalists and video specialists to train and that took time and management. ... Even details like the mental shift from counting pages to counting characters – all that had to be integrated into the way of working.”

That shift was not going to happen overnight, and so Le Parisien’s technical team actually operated both the old and the new CMS in parallel throughout the transition so that journalists continued to work as before until trained and onboarded with the new one. **The transition has been completed now, but ensuring it went ahead smoothly took time, patience, and planning.**

“We started in 2018 and launched a new site, finished in 2019 and managed with Arc,” Souzeau recalls. “We took a year and a half to prepare everyone for the web-first workflow, which gave us the space to deal with issues where the tool wasn’t fully adapted and changes were needed.

**There were complications, of course,** including issues like word length since articles written for web would be sent directly to print where they would need to be trimmed to size – but with the same number of staff...”

## Keeping it in-house

Staffing and training headaches were minimised with a purely internal, staged approach to change. “We didn’t bring in outsiders but instead relied on our own journalists. The first to be trained were the web team and we worked in a step-by-step way. I used to work on the web side myself, but you can see how the

approach has changed over the years. The audience has changed and the readership is younger. So we piloted the idea of having different trainers from each of the different services including local, and national, and choosing people with different profiles, not just the young with a web background.”

Training the trainers meant that the newly acquired knowledge rippled outwards, but still took time and a structured approach.

They started in February and trained 400 journalists in three months with follow-up sessions continuing up until last June. Speaking now in November the new CMS is now second nature for staff.

Like with any new system implementation, it can be a challenging journey on many fronts, but it appears a digital-first mindset is firmly in place in this case.

## In summary...

- As a part of a broader digital transformation project, called #LeParisien200000 with the specific goal of reaching that number in digital subscriptions, the company also wanted to invest in modern technology, specifically a CMS to help drive the “digital-first” mantra.
- After choosing Arc, it started working with other French publishers (which had Arc) to iron out issues and jointly were better positioned to get them resolved.
- Le Parisien did much of the training itself, using trained staff as champion users to train others.

## Case Study: Sud Ouest in France

# Deploying a CMS amid a pandemic



We have heard numerous cases of how the pandemic has disrupted, delayed or derailed the implementation of new technologies or systems within news operations. Sud Ouest in France faced this situation over the last two years yet has managed to get its new CMS up and running. Sophie Lemaire, whose role includes responsibility for all editorial tools at Sud Ouest, spoke about this during WAN-IFRA's CMS Day this past June.

From its historical headquarters in Bordeaux, Sud Ouest is a classic of regional daily news publishing and one that – like many publishers today – is juggling with the challenge of **retaining its traditional following while pushing into new markets and new ways of working.**

The group publishes five paid daily newspapers, a total circulation of nearly 300,000 copies per day, with a daily audience of over 2.2 million readers. Its sites have nearly 41 million visits and 130 million page views per month.

**Sud Ouest features a freemium model, with about 40,000 digital subscriptions.** The paper has 250 journalists, mostly in Bordeaux, as well as 25 local agencies and 700 correspondents covering hyperlocal news in small towns or villages.

### One CMS linking many teams

“It was clear from the beginning that **the new CMS had to be the same across all the newsrooms of the group**, but also for both online and print publications,” Lemaire said. “Previously we had two CMSs – one for web and one for print – but as part of this project **the goal was for the CMS to be one of the links between the newsroom and the IT team.**”

Part of that was the growing realisation that the title could ill afford to have two entirely separate teams catering for the two faces of the content. “In the newsroom we had a lot of journalists whose daily activity was purely to design the pages of the print newspaper. So one key goal was to spend less time on the daily design of the print newspaper, and to focus more of our energy on the online publications. And of course **the main goal was to have a CMS which allowed us to do more, and do it better when it came to our digital activity.**”

### Then came COVID

The original timeline of the project dates back to 2018 when project roles and benchmarks were established. Shortly after came the analysis of potential workflows and the selection of a project team that ultimately proposed new workflows in 2019. Then, well of course then it was 2020 and **COVID swiftly shifted the best laid plans at Sud Ouest, just as it did in so many publishing houses.** “So we had a bit of delay,” observed Lemaire, dryly.

At a time of remote working and social distancing, the team had to make decisions about how to roll out a new tool and, in particular, how to train the staff. “At the time of the settings, parameterisation, and customisation of

the tool, we had to work remotely with the team from Stibo (the choice of CMS) working with us from Atlanta (in the US). Which was not what we had expected. But we didn't want remote training for staff, so we had a bit of delay to allow us to have them in the room with us."

## Up and running

That in-person training began in February 2021 and took three months to cover the main newsroom where everyone is now working on the new CMS (CUE).

That's far from the end of the full implementation however. "Everybody's working on our new CMS and that's okay, but we are just getting past the point where we have to adjust, and make corrections, and deal with the unexpected issues that typically come in any exercise like this. Which brings us to step two, which is much more interesting. That's the step where we can improve, deploy, and make new products with the new tool."

**Initial response to the new CMS is positive**, but Lemaire doesn't gloss over the effort it took to put it in place, considering the complications of the COVID effect. "It was difficult to achieve the project on time because of the unique context but also with the IT team not only changing the CMS but also other parts of the online publication process. It was a huge job."

## In summary...

- Like many newsrooms, Sud Ouest wanted to move to one solution for both print and online – not just from a technical point of view, but also as part of a strategic mindset.
- The CMS had to help to facilitate the paper's digital strategy and acumen.
- Many of its best-laid plans were disrupted by the onset of the pandemic. The company chose to proceed carefully, and hold in-person training later to fully move to the CMS (Cue from Stibo).
- But the system is up and running and Sud Ouest chose to do take on much of the functional development, led by a multidisciplinary team.

## Ensuring a smooth transition amid a crisis

Part of that workload came from the desire to make the transition as smooth as possible. "In the first step the website and applications haven't changed much for visitors or users. **Everything is more fluid, more intuitive in the newsroom for the journalists**, but we have yet to implement really new functionalities." She pointed out that with everybody working from home, communication was key to keep them informed but it also served to accelerate changes in work patterns elsewhere. "Changes become more necessary and more urgent. The newsroom had learned how to work remotely, and how to focus much more on web applications: web-only production has grown a lot during the lockdown, of course. So the whole process was getting more and more agile, which helped us."

## In-house team to take over some dev

While initial rollout was done closely (if remotely) in collaboration with Stibo, **the development responsibility for functionality rests with the internal team at Sud Ouest**. "That's really how we wanted it. We wanted to have the knowledge and be able to integrate new tools, external tools, and develop new functionalities by ourselves."

Along with the progressive handover of capabilities from the Stibo team to an internal one, great pains have been taken to ensure the balance of skills to oversee the deployment, Lemaire said. "We opted for a team of mixed profiles, with two people from IT, two from print, and two from digital development plus journalists, newsroom managers and CMS 'super users.' It's a mixed team and I think that's really necessary because it's not just a tool, a technical project; it's a new workflow, a new engine."

## Improving that digital confidence

Ensuring the smooth running of that engine has, for the moment at least, taken precedence over the future goals of new product development. "For the moment the main impact is really internal; it's the workflow and our organisation in the newsroom. What is really satisfying is that everyone in the newsroom is involved and interested in our online activity. Everybody has raised their knowledge, and invested in the culture of being a digital news company which wasn't the case before. Digital production is clean, and well edited now which is a very satisfying point and a good basis from which to introduce new functionalities and really develop our digital activity."

# Going live in 40 days

**Sud Ouest (page 24) and NOVO offer similar cases of two publishers trying to implement a CMS during the pandemic but with one big difference. ... While Sud Ouest chose to delay much of its training and implementation of its CMS amid the pandemic, NOVO didn't have the same luxury working on a legacy system in parallel – it didn't have a legacy system because it was making its official launch into the weekly newspaper market. The solution? A crash course and self-imposed deadline of 40 days to go live.**

During WAN-IFRA's CMS Day, NOVO Deputy Director Diogo Agostinho explained how the weekly newspaper did just that, naturally, with a big assist from its CMS partner, as well as what the system's requirements were.

NOVO is produced in both print and online and is a part of the Lapanews Group in Portugal. "We wanted to bring another paper to the newsstands in Portugal and we launched April 16th (2021)," Agostinho said. "We have a team of 25 journalists with politics and the economy at our core, plus a lot of commentary. This is what distinguishes our brand – opinion and commentary. As a weekly, we focus on depth, not minute-by-minute information."

## Key requirements

**Flexibility was crucial** for NOVO when it came to its CMS, so it could also grow as its business grew down the road. In practice, that meant being flexible enough to start with a cloud solution to limit costs and be integrated with other tools that NOVO may need in the future, including analytics and subscriptions. It also had to be **a simple tool for the journalists using it every day** – and that would be a big benefit given the timeframe

for launch. **Equally important were its remote working capabilities, multi-platform publication, push notifications and social media integration.**

Ana Simoes, Senior Project Manager for Protecmedia, the CMS of choice, said NOVO took the decision to use the combination of the provider's ITER WCM CMS and Milenium as a back office. Three key parameters for search engines were required for the website templates for NOVO, said Simoes: **SEO optimisation, improved UX design, and quicker website loading.** With AI-backed functionality and a semantic intelligence engine, updating of sitemaps, metadata tagging, SEO, etc., became possible both in real-time and after publication.

## Launched on time

Needless to say, the deadline to get all the training and implementation done was "a bit stressful," said Agostinho with a smile. "But we made it." It helped that many of the journalists had worked with Milenium in the past.

"Today it is so **important that your website is intuitive for your readers**, and that functionality allows us to grow – as an organisation but also with the expectations of our audience. Internally, it is also critical today to work efficiently and remotely, and in my role I am often off-site and in meetings, however, I can see the construction of news in real time and that has tremendous value.

**"Launching a newspaper in the peak of a pandemic has been a major challenge,"** he continued. "The media is not in a good place without the pandemic factor. We are extremely disciplined, since launching a newspaper involves a lot of cost. We have to do a lot with a lot less. So we must choose our partners wisely."

## In summary...

- The weekly paper made its official market launch at the same time it went live with its CMS – amid the pandemic.
- Remote working and flexibility to grow with the business were two key needs.

# CMS providers to consider

Here are members of the WAN-IFRA supplier community that offer content management systems to news publishers.

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<b>alfa Media Partner</b>	<b><a href="http://www.alfamedia.com">www.alfamedia.com</a></b>
<b>Anygraaf</b>	<b><a href="http://www.anygraaf.fi">www.anygraaf.fi</a></b>
<b>Atex Global Media</b>	<b><a href="http://www.atex.com">www.atex.com</a></b>
<b>D-Share</b>	<b><a href="http://www.dshare.it">www.dshare.it</a></b>
<b>Digital Media News Inc</b>	<b><a href="http://www.xalok.com">www.xalok.com</a></b>
<b>Eidosmedia</b>	<b><a href="http://www.eidosmedia.com">www.eidosmedia.com</a></b>
<b>iApps Technologies</b>	<b><a href="http://iapps-technologies.com">iapps-technologies.com</a></b>
<b>InterRed</b>	<b><a href="http://www.interred.de">www.interred.de</a></b>
<b>Naviga Global</b>	<b><a href="http://www.navigaglobal.com">www.navigaglobal.com</a></b>
<b>ppi Media</b>	<b><a href="http://www.ppimedia.de">www.ppimedia.de</a></b>
<b>Protecmedia</b>	<b><a href="http://www.protecmedia.com">www.protecmedia.com</a></b>
<b>Publish Inc</b>	<b><a href="http://publishprotocol.io">publishprotocol.io</a></b>
<b>Quintype Technologies</b>	<b><a href="http://www.quintype.com">www.quintype.com</a></b>
<b>Stibo DX</b>	<b><a href="http://www.ccieurope.com">www.ccieurope.com</a></b>
<b>WhiteBeard</b>	<b><a href="http://www.whitebeard.me/news">www.whitebeard.me/news</a></b>
<b>WoodWing Software</b>	<b><a href="http://www.woodwing.com">www.woodwing.com</a></b>



# Newsroom Summit 2022 and CMS Solutions Day

## Strategies propelling the newsroom: 27 and 28 April

Newsroom strategists will meet again virtually and share what has worked well in the last year and some great ideas to explore in the next months.

Is there an editorial challenge that obsesses your management team? Why not share it with us? We're looking for your input on the key sessions at the Newsroom Summit – joining the inspirational team of newsroom leaders and advisors that have worked with us over the last few years.

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Hannah Sarney, Head of Audience Engagement,  
Financial Times, United Kingdom



Elske Schouten, Deputy Editor-in-Chief, NRC,  
The Netherlands



Ingeborg Volan, Editor for publishing strategy and visual  
journalism, WEF Board member, Dagens Næringsliv, Norway



Swantje Dake, Editor in Chief Digital,  
Stuttgarter Zeitung, Germany



Thomas Thelen, Editor in Chief,  
Aachener Zeitung, Germany



Dmitry Shishkin, Digital transformation, content strategy  
and innovation consultant, WEF Board Member, UK



Nick Petrie, Head of Digital,  
The Times & Sunday Times, UK

## CMS Solutions Day is on 26 April!

**CMS solutions Day is back: a deep dive into the world of content management system, designed to help publishing companies around the world find the best solutions to create engaging and performing contents with an optimal use of their teams and resources.**

- Hear about smart ideas and solutions from the best CMS vendors
- Is your own CMS missing key functionalities?
- Publishers will share their suggestions on the CMS selection process

Meet and hear from a selection of dedicated news CMS solution providers – all gathered in one virtual space!