Acquia

How Innovative Cross-Functional Teams Are Delivering Better Customer Experiences

Connecting People, Processes, and Technology to Drive Success

Table of Contents

How Innovative Cross-Functional Teams Are Delivering Better Customer Experiences

Introduction

Over the last few years, the digital experience landscape has changed at a faster pace than ever before.

Today's customers expect seamless, personalized experiences across an ever-expanding array of channels. And they're increasingly fickle. They'll quickly shift their loyalty to a competitor if that brand delivers rich content that entertains or informs them about a particular product's benefits while they're researching a potential purchase. To keep up with these rising expectations, organizations must accelerate development and digital transformation timelines — all while staying within budget and resource constraints.

This is no easy task. We know that the COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally transformed every aspect of the consumer journey, elevating the importance of each digital touchpoint. And as the acute phase of the crisis recedes, it's become increasingly clear that digital-first markets and business models are here to stay. For B2B organizations, Gartner predicts that 80% of sales interactions between buyers and suppliers will take place in digital channels by 2025.

Meanwhile, global consumer-facing e-commerce sales are expected to exceed $8 trillion by 2026. In this world, the quality of the customer experience (CX) you deliver online will only become a more critical differentiator between companies that thrive and those that fall by the wayside.

Amidst a challenging economy, however, marketers and digital teams are being asked to do more with less. According to Gartner, overall marketing budgets (as a percentage of company revenue) decreased from 11% in 2020 to 9.5% in 2022, and 56% of those budgets now go toward digital channels.

With less room in their budgets, marketers have reduced their reliance on outsourcing. This means they're doing more things in house and leaning less heavily on agencies. For instance, 29% of agency work shifted to internal teams in 2021.

On the one hand, it has never been more important to deliver more high-quality digital content, faster. Providing just-right experiences is critical if your company hopes to engage, satisfy, and even delight its customers. On the other hand, teams are trying to meet ramped-up demands with fewer resources than before (or, in the best-case scenario, no additional resources). This creates a gap that organizations are struggling to fill. Gartner reports that 76% of digitalization teams are unable to deliver with the speed and flexibility that's needed by the business.

So, what strategies should today's enterprises follow to overcome this challenge? In this e-book, we'll describe a cross-functional

approach that maximizes the output from people, processes, and technologies to optimize productivity, agility, and innovation; enhance the employee experience (EX); and improve the customer experience (CX) you deliver.

By taking advantage of this collaboration-powered strategy, organizations can create more content on a smaller budget and enhance workflows so that they can keep up with rapidly evolving consumer preferences and expectations.

76%
of digitalization teams are unable to deliver with the speed and flexibility that's needed by the business

Modernizing Your Digital Strategy: Neither Marketing nor IT Can Go It Alone

How Innovative Cross-Functional Teams Are Delivering Better Customer Experiences

Digital transformation is a big job, but many hands make lighter work. Currently, CIOs and CMOs alike face growing pressure to accelerate their enterprise's digital transformation agenda. But conventional approaches – in which responsibilities are allocated within traditional departmental silos – aren't up to the task. For example, a recent McKinsey Global Survey of technology and business leaders reports that the gap between organizations that appear to be succeeding with their digital transformation efforts and those who lag behind has widened since the pandemic.

So, a growing number of the world's most successful digital businesses are turning away from legacy models and instead coming to rely on new forms of value delivery. Progressive CIOs now leverage what Gartner has dubbed the "fusion team" approach. In this model, multidisciplinary teams that blend technology expertise with specialized knowledge from other domains are blurring the boundaries between IT and the rest of the business. It's an agile strategy that's increasingly associated with successful digital transformation.

What Is a Fusion Team?

Gartner calls it a fusion team, and other organizations refer to them as "tiger teams," "SWAT teams," or "digitalization teams." No matter the name, this approach heralds a new form of value delivery. Rather than organizing work by

responsibilities within business functions, fusion teams are multidisciplinary. They're set up to digitize business capabilities that lead to more positive business and customer outcomes. Fusion teams draw on a talent pool that crosses

different areas of the business, including marketing, digital and customer experience, IT, and DevOps. In different organizations, fusion teams will contain different ratios of business users, business technologists, and IT specialists.

Regardless, they're united in their shared business objectives, even though their functional expertise may be diverse.

Fusion teams:

Blend technology skills, analytical skills, and business domain expertise

Share accountability for the solutions they build

Organize by outcomes and not business functions

Not only does leveraging the fusion team approach increase the likelihood that an organization's digital transformation initiatives will succeed, but it also improves the organization's ability to deliver highly engaging content and top-notch digital experiences. When more work is being done in house, you'll need to incorporate more people from across the business into the team that's creating and delivering that content.

This is why it's important to factor the impact that a positive employee experience (EX) can have. According to a 2020 study from Forbes Insights of over 300 employee experience and customer experience leaders, 70% of executives agree that improved EX leads to improved CX, which leads to rapid revenue growth. There is also research from Gartner that reinforces the positive impact a good EX can have on the CX you deliver. The firm reports that organizations whose employees are largely satisfied with their experience are 48% more likely to meet organizational customer satisfaction goals, and 89% more likely to meet organizational innovation goals.

But what is employee experience? The idea of a corporate intranet might spring to mind, but to be effective, organizations need to provide more value. In addition to current company content and administrative resources, today's employees expect personalized digital experiences and access to all the digital tools needed to do their jobs.

When members of a fusion team are supported by an enhanced EX featuring powerful, open technology, they are positioned to collaborate and accomplish more. Now, both marketers and business users can take greater responsibility for updating and maintaining key webpages that they've created — and since they no longer need to rely on developers to do that work, the technical teams gain time for more innovative undertakings. The newfound productivity generated from all this makes it easier to deliver a high-quality CX and drive more revenue.

Gartner reports that organizations whose employees are largely satisfied with their experience are 48% more likely to meet organizational customer satisfaction goals, and 89% more likely to meet organizational innovation goals.

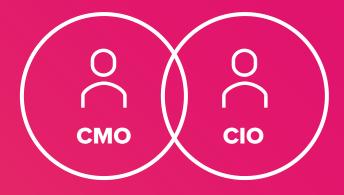# How Composability Helps Fusion Teams Achieve Their Goals

Fusion teams are built on the basis of strong alignment between the CMO and the CIO. If a true partnership is not achieved, both the CMO and the CIO risk being sidelined by a chief digital officer (CDO) or having their responsibilities shifted to other business units. Meanwhile, the organization may continue to under-deliver, ultimately losing revenue, market share, and competitive advantage.

In order for marketing and technology leaders to achieve the right degree of alignment, their teams need to be able to collaborate seamlessly and in ways that enable each contributor to showcase their individual strengths. This requires tools that marketers, web developers, digital teams, and IT professionals can all take advantage of equally. Closed, monolithic systems that limit your choices to those of a single vendor won't deliver the flexibility you need. While it's possible to add integrations, doing so is often complex and messy. Most legacy digital experience architectures simply weren't designed to support the types of cross-functional digital interactions that drive success in today's world.

Nowadays, customers expect more polished, seamless, and personalized experiences.

Companies need to stay agile in order to create these. This means democratizing access to all the tools that deliver content across a wide variety of channels. From these shared toolsets, every user should be able to leverage the capabilities they need to get their jobs done.
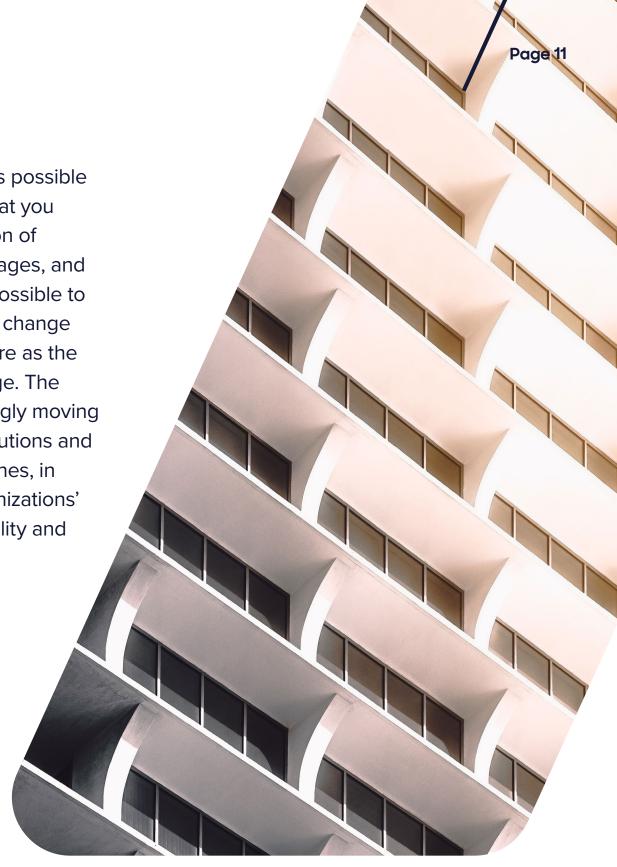
Fusion teams are built on the basis of strong alignment between the CMO and the CIO.

CMO

CIO

Composability is the key to this democratization when it comes to digital experience platforms (DXPs) and content management systems (CMSs). A composable DXP enables your organization to grow and expand with your business needs through the composition of technology solutions. Your technology and solutions are connected and interchangeable — and help accelerate your ability to change. It also serves as a common, shared foundation upon which teams involved in development, deployment, content creation, site building, campaigns, testing, and optimization can all build workflows. Ultimately, composable solutions enable organizations to better meet customer needs.

To illustrate the kind of flexibility a composable DXP can offer, consider the growing role of artificial intelligence (AI). Up to now, many organizations have leveraged AI to power their chatbots or personalization tools. Combining AI with a composable DXP can help you more easily automate routine tasks, analyze large amounts of data, and improve the customer experience you deliver. This positions you to drive efficiency, productivity, and better decision-making for fusion teams in the modern business landscape.

When you apply a composable architecture approach, packaged business capabilities serve as the fundamental building blocks for the entire enterprise. It's possible to assemble exactly what you need from a combination of services, libraries, packages, and custom code. It's also possible to quickly add, remove, or change pieces of the architecture as the business's needs change. The DXP market is increasingly moving toward composable solutions and away from monolithic ones, in large part to meet organizations' growing need for flexibility and agility.

The Original (and Ultimate) Composable Architectural Framework: Drupal

Drupal is an open source CMS that's widely used and supported by an enormous community.

1 in 8 enterprise sites run on Drupal

There are more than 10,000 active community contributors

Drupal features over 46,000 integrations and extensions

Drupal.org sees 1.2M unique visitors per month

Drupal was purpose-built to manage structured data using composable components

When an organization adopts this approach, fusion teams can manage concurrent workflows. Instead of waiting for upstream stakeholders to complete their portion of a project, multiple groups are able to work autonomously and simultaneously.

Because they are driven to achieve shared business outcomes versus a single team objective, fusion teams will handle wins and losses together, with collaborators learning from one another along the way. Working in tandem, fusion teammates take a distributed, broad-based approach that Gartner has found progresses 2.5 times faster than a linear method.

By removing the typical dependencies that tend to halt forward momentum of projects, content creators, marketers, data scientists, back-end developers, and front-end developers can all execute their tasks independently. For instance, content marketers, product marketers, event marketers, and other business users can create, update, and optimize webpages without help from developers. Data scientists can move forward to build machine learning models while the front-end developers improve customer experience.

No one needs to wait for the other groups.

In this way, the composable platform enables speed and efficiency by streamlining the creation and delivery of new data-driven and personalized digital experiences. It also enhances the employee experience and facilitates cross-functional collaboration, since each member of the fusion team requires a different set of capabilities to achieve success.

Benefits of Leveraging the Composable Approach in Your CMS

Makes content creation faster and easier

Facilitates alignment between marketing and development teams

Those teams are better positioned to help deliver meaningful customer experiences

Everyone's needs are met — even when they're diverse

Meets project requirements for multiple use cases today and those on your future roadmap

The Right CMS Capabilities for Every Member of the Fusion Team

In Gartner's model, fusion teams comprise three different types of technology users. There are business users, IT professionals, and between them, a group of users that Gartner calls "business technologists." The business technologist is an emerging role that focuses on aligning technology with business objectives.

They're someone within the organization who has technical expertise but who also understands the organization's business goals and strategy. Business technologists serve as a liaison between IT and the business, and they're directly responsible for driving digital transformation. The role won't be called a business technologist in every organization, but most have this sort of stakeholder.

Gartner

Business Innovation

Technology Innovation

Fusion Teams

Business User

Business Technologist

Central IT

Acquia's open and composable DXP supports Drupal with solutions that enhance and extend Drupal for the entire fusion team. In line with this goal, we've created a version of the fusion team concept that aligns with the market trends cited in Gartner's research. Here, the marketer is on one side (corresponding to Gartner's business user), the developer on the other (corresponding to Gartner's central IT role), and the ambitious site builder is in the middle (corresponding to Gartner's business technologist).

How Innovative Cross-Functional Teams Are Delivering Better Customer Experiences

Each of these roles needs very different things from their CMS. The marketer typically requires a **low-code approach** that enables them to control the assembly, creation, and optimization of content. Using a drag-and-drop UI, marketers can build the pages and experiences they want to create, getting immediate visual feedback. They can also assemble advanced and dynamic components that were built by development teams into compelling, full-scale experiences. And they can continuously optimize their content, ensuring that it is easily discoverable and the right content will be served to the right people at the right time.

In contrast, developers are usually looking for a high-code approach. This maximizes their power to create experiences, templates, and code that are exactly as they want them to be. This requires a **headless architecture** in which the orchestration of the digital experience is decoupled from the management of the content. Headless empowers composable architectures to deliver content to different devices across channels and media in diverse contexts.

But what about the role in the middle, our ambitious site builders? With Drupal, it's possible to build a **hybrid architecture** in which either high-code or low-code assembly can be used, depending on the enterprise's needs and the particular use case at hand. In a hybrid strategy, certain areas of content can be rendered and controlled within a low-code platform, while others are built using fully decoupled, headless client-side rendering.

Drupal can support all three approaches within a centralized content management system for the entire enterprise. This means that Drupal fulfills the needs of all fusion team members equally well. The approach facilitates a technology foundation that's essential for the team to succeed and power transformative innovation for the business.

As your organization's CMS and digital experience goals evolve, Drupal will be able to meet your present and future requirements.

How Acquia Accelerates New Drupal CMS Projects

Acquia CMS Starter Kits for Drupal are a collection of trusted and best-in-class Drupal modules curated and maintained by Acquia to accelerate new application builds. With the Acquia CMS Starter Kits for Drupal, you now have the option to choose a starter kit based on your users, project, and goals.

How Innovative Cross-Functional Teams Are Delivering Better Customer Experiences

Who You Are	Marketer	Developer	
What You Need	The ability to create rich content experiences quickly without relying on your developer team	The ability to separate the back-end workflow from the front-end content display	The ability to accelerate new Drupal projects using the open source community modules
How To Accelerate Your Drupal Project	**Acquia CMS Starter Kit for Drupal - Enterprise Low-Code** Powered by Acquia Site Studio, which helped Bayer reduce time to market by up to 40%, this enables you to control and create layout and display	**Acquia CMS Starter Kit for Drupal - Headless** Optimized for a headless environment, this is easy for front-end developers to use and can accelerate delivery of new headless Drupal applications by up to 50%	**Acquia CMS Starter Kit for Drupal - Community** Ideal for greater autonomy over layout and display, this gives developers a strong foundation to build upon

Fusion Teams in Action: How Innovative Organizations Are Achieving Excellence in the Real World

Stanley Black & Decker

With more than 6,000 employees spanning its 15 umbrella brands, Stanley Black & Decker has grown to become the world's leading tool and storage company.

Stanley Black & Decker has recently embarked upon an extensive digital and e-commerce transformation initiative, with the goal of driving customer obsession, extreme innovation, and growth. Not only did the company implement a new digital experience platform as part of this transformation, but it embarked upon far-reaching internal cultural change as well.

To support this initiative, Stanley Black & Decker applied an agile-based approach, creating teams that had an optimal mix of skills and expertise. One team specialized in local markets, another in development, while another focused on content creation. Each team included business users, business technologists, and IT specialists, and worked in a synchronized fashion.

By leveraging Drupal for their CMS combined with Acquia's open and composable DXP, Stanley Black & Decker empowered stakeholders within local markets to individualize their sites while remaining within global governance and brand guidelines. The company also wanted to activate customized e-commerce sites for local markets. Through their cross-functional teams, the organization

used Acquia Site Factory for multisite hosting and Acquia Site Studio for low-code site building to create four new sites for three brands in just three weeks. By taking advantage of composable technologies and innovative team structures, their team is working to build 200 new sites before the end of 2023.
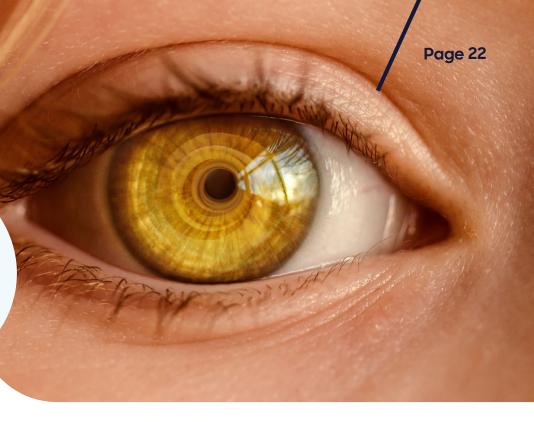
Alcon

Alcon is a mission-driven eye care company that strives to provide innovative vision products that enhance quality of life by helping people see better.

Alcon

Divested from the multinational pharmaceutical company Novartis in mid-2018, Alcon had to migrate a large number of websites from Novartis's hosting platform within a tight timeframe. Tight collaboration between omnichannel marketing and mobile development teams — and a fruitful partnership with Acquia — made this possible.

With Drupal as their CMS and Acquia Site Studio for low-code site building, Alcon was able to put power back into the hands of content creators within local markets. This freed them to innovate while saving development effort now that both groups – developers and content creators – are able to autonomously and simultaneously complete their tasks.

In fact, Alcon estimates approximately $500,000 in cost savings potential and a 26% reduction in development time since undertaking the project. They were able to migrate 73 websites to Acquia Site Factory within a 14-month period, and no longer need to rely on outside development firms to help them with site creation and maintenance.
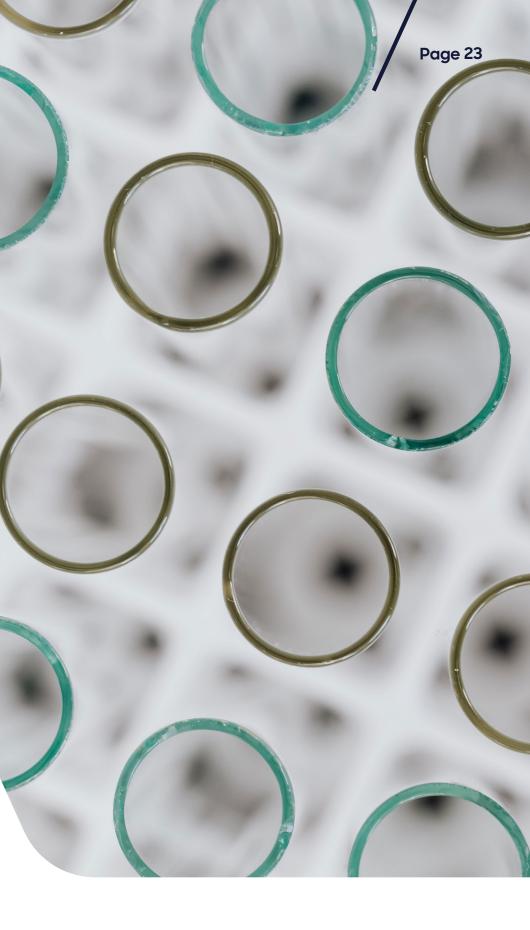
Bayer

A global life sciences organization with more than 100,000 employees and three divisions — pharmaceuticals, consumer health, and crop science — Bayer must maintain an enormously complex digital ecosystem.

Challenged with an aging legacy CMS that was rapidly approaching end of life, Bayer's digital team found themselves needing to migrate nearly 1,600 websites around the world onto a new platform on an aggressive timeline. They chose Drupal and Acquia.

Bayer's leadership team understood the importance of aligning stakeholders across the organization on a common, centralized content strategy, as well as the value of repurposing established, useful content on new sites in an efficient manner. With the combination of Drupal and Acquia, Bayer enabled local markets to become more flexible and nimble. Leveraging an agile approach, stakeholders within the local markets were able to

build and update content without involvement from IT, expediting their timeline. Previously, it took months to deliver just one site; now, they're delivering three sites per day.

Bayer chose a hybrid CMS approach, combining Drupal and Acquia Site Studio in conjunction with decoupled components to empower local market business users to take more responsibility over the key webpages and content they created and maintained.

Not only did this allow developers to reallocate their efforts toward more innovative projects, but it also enabled local markets to meet various legal, regulatory, and language requirements and facilitated standardization and component reusability across the enterprise.

Their team was able to migrate 437 sites in more than 50 different languages to Drupal within 14 months. It now takes them an average of two to three weeks to launch a new site. This represents a 30 to 40% reduction in development time. In addition, their new sites are more adaptable and user-friendly, resulting in increased organic traffic and engagement.

Summary and Takeaways

Today's digital teams face mounting pressure to do more with less and deliver more content faster. To keep up with these rising expectations, organizations must accelerate development and digital transformation timelines — all while staying within budget and resource constraints.

To accomplish this, many companies are starting to leverage what Gartner has dubbed the "fusion team" approach — and what other organizations might simply call agile collaboration, "tiger teams," "SWAT teams," or digitalization teams – where stakeholders from across the organization come together to deliver digital experiences and engaging content.

Acquia's open and composable DXP offers solutions to extend the power of Drupal for the entire fusion team. Since Drupal supports low-code, high-code, and hybrid approaches to page and site building, it meets the needs of all fusion team members equally well and provides the technology foundation that's essential for the team to succeed, for the employee experience to improve and for the business to deliver transformative innovations.

Find Out How a Fusion Team Approach Could Have a Transformative Impact on Your Business

Drupal is an open source, hybrid CMS for managing digital content and experiences. With Drupal and the Acquia CMS Starter Kits for Drupal, your entire team will be able to more efficiently and effectively create and deliver content in a headless architecture, low-code architecture, and everything in between.

Request a Demo

ACQUIA.COM

About Acquia

Acquia empowers the world's most ambitious brands to create digital customer experiences that matter. With open source Drupal at its core, the Acquia Digital Experience Platform (DXP) enables marketers, developers, and IT operations teams at thousands of global organizations to rapidly compose and deploy digital products and services that engage customers, enhance conversions, and help businesses stand out.