

# Digital Content Distribution

FULLFILLING THE PROMISE





## About the Author

Tom Kotlarek  
VP | Technology

The Rocket Scientist. Tom K takes technology very seriously. A 25-year technology veteran, Tom's resume reads like a spy thriller. He has produced spacecraft database systems for Jet Propulsion Laboratory/NASA and has also dabbled in red carpet appearances while heading up IT for DreamWorks SKG. Tom has been leading the Technology and Core teams at LEVEL since 2004. His current brainchild is SWITCH, the company's fourth generation content management platform. Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science from Michigan Tech: affirmative. Graduate degree in Computer Information Systems from Claremont Graduate University: roger.

Introduction	02
Data Drives User Experience	02
Keys to Finding the Right Solution	03
The Four Approaches to Using Your Data Effectively	03
Conclusion	06

## Introduction

Today's economic uncertainty is making more companies shift the focus of their marketing strategies from traditional media to more digitally based programs. Why is that? Because digital marketing at its core is measurable. And in a world where we need to see real results from shrinking budgets, digital gives us that benefit. Innovative companies are capitalizing on another advantage offered by digital media: the ability to make sure you're providing consistent brand message across multiple channels. We call that integrated digital marketing.

Because the concept of integrated digital marketing combines brand, platform and data strategies, a wide breadth of skills is needed to harness its benefits. A standard brand agency alone isn't good enough anymore. It requires adding a whole set of skills into the mix:

- **UX expertise** across connected devices
- **Online marketing strategies** that deliver branded experiences to targeted audiences
- **Ad planning** that lowers the cost of the unit sale – and mitigates risk
- **Analytics** that measure the specific returns of initiatives
- **Globalization services** that broaden the target audience
- **A technology platform** that provides economies of scale across many initiatives

But just having all that in the bag of tricks isn't enough to ensure success. The integration of those components through integrated digital data is the differentiating catalyst.

## Data Drives User Experience

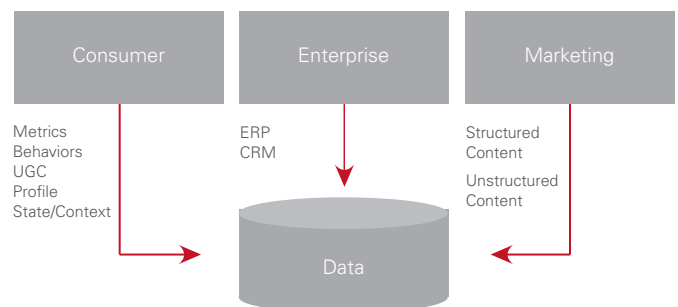
When we talk about digital marketing, a company's brand is perceived by the end user based on how they experience the brand, whether online or offline. If the path is confusing or the visuals look stale, the user will have a negative view of the brand. Ultimately, in this case, perception is reality. The user experience drives the brand.

But what drives the users' experience online? It comes down to data. Too often overlooked, data needs to be at the hub of building a digital brand experience.

DATA > UX > BRAND

Everything starts with data, and everything comes back to data. Data is everywhere.

The following graphic illustrates how data colors the users' perception of the brand as structured or unstructured content, as the set of business goals or project requirements and as content strategies, ranging from enterprise data to user-generated content. Additionally, data provides a potent feedback loop to alter or tailor the user's perception through metrics, analytics and behavioral patterns of online users, the state and context of a user as well as data encapsulated in a user profile.



Understanding how to store and mine the data resource is imperative to both efficiency and effectiveness. Historically, data has been an afterthought in the process with silos of information created on more of an ad-hoc basis. The integration of seemingly disparate data sets introduces an opportunity provide an exceptional user experience.

## Keys to Finding the Right Size **Solution**

One of the basic problems with finding a good solution for managing data is solution size. Just like the classic children's story, we often find solutions that are too small or too big, but it's difficult to find something that's just the right size. And what may be the right size for other organizations in your industry doesn't always translate to the correct answer for your specific needs.

Marketers look for something that supplies just the data the user needs: no more, no less. They want it with complete integration, but with no extra strings attached. Having to deal with other groups, internal or external, is time consuming and draining when all they're trying to do is get eyeballs on content and turn those viewers into customers. It's more than web content management alone, but, please, not an enterprise content management system!

Technologists are interested in doing this once, not over and over (and over) again. They want to plan out all the intricacies of integrating everything for everyone. A central repository of data where you can control who gets it when (and how) will make all of our lives simpler, right? If they just spend enough time planning this out and buy an overarching solution from an established vendor (read: enterprise software), all our problems will be solved once and for all!

The reality is that both marketing and technology views are warranted and need to be taken into account. We need to balance both agility and scalability when considering the problem. Agility allows us to get what we need quickly and respond to the demands of the market. Scalability enables us to be able to grow over time without losing the investment we've already made. But, typically, we don't have the time or resources to study all the nuances of the problem up front and get all the answers right.

It turns out that the concepts of service-oriented architectures are leading us in the right direction. With a solution based on services, we can grow a system to support new types of data as they become available. Services internal to the organization or external, cloud-based services give the ability to rapidly provision and utilize new trends, new data and new approaches into the market.

**"cloud-based services give the ability to rapidly provision and utilize new trends new data and new approaches into the market."**

## The Four Approaches to Using Your **Data** Effectively

When we think about using our data resources for the purposes of online marketing, envision a continuum where we will need to handle all different types of things: from the simplest banner ads and brochure-ware all the way to complex, highly dynamic, personalized experiences. Across that spectrum, there are four well-known constructs that a company might employ.

FULFILLING THE PROMISE OF DIGITAL CONTENT DISTRIBUTION

**CMS** | A standard CMS application handles static, text-based sites or simple asset delivery needs with ease. They're best at serving up a corporate brochure or a product-based microsite. Generally though, we need more than just single sites with a single language. Our CMS content should be easily localizable. We should be able to inherit the structure of a single site and utilize it for sub-sites. When we make modifications to the master site, we want the updates to trickle out (if desired) to the other sites based on the master. Whether our product is a game, a mobile phone or a car, each of the microsities we create has similar structure, but the visuals and the content change.

In the context of data, a CMS is great at managing mostly unstructured and structured marketing content, but not much else.

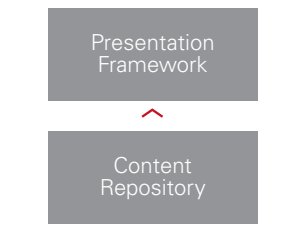
**RIA-Enabled CMS** | A CMS that provides for static behaviors on top of static content covers a lot of what we need, but what happens when we need more dimension in the user experience? RIAs (Rich Internet Applications) can provide the dynamic experience that makes the static content come to life. Whether it's in the gaming or entertainment space, or providing product configurators, this type of approach is very useful in providing an engaging user experience. An RIA excels at helping to guide a user through data or processes that would be overwhelming if presented all at once in a static way.

At its core though, it still requires similar types of content management as a standard CMS. We are adding another layer on top of our content manager that provides a framework for dynamic behaviors. Common frameworks include Flash, JavaScript libraries and Silverlight.

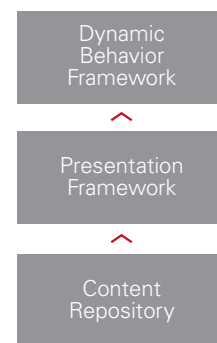
**Integrated Marketing Platform** | A CMS, with static or dynamic behaviors, still only provides a portion of what is required for a full digital campaign. Email messaging, social media, ad serving and metrics/analytics are all important aspects when tasked with facilitating a campaign that grabs a consumer from multiple angles. An integrated marketing platform that is built around the CMS, but adds additional components to accomplish the other, non-website pieces of the campaign is the answer. Integrated platforms provide the central repository of data (the CMS) that can be purposed in multiple ways without time-consuming and costly replication. Things, such as using the same asset in a banner ad, an email message or directly on the website, become easier and more cost effective to accomplish.

Pulling these components together gives us the pathways to also create a system that "learns" how users interact with the brand and adjusts the delivery of data accordingly.

CMS



RIA-Enabled CMS



Integrated Marketing Platform



"Instead of the complex enterprise content management system, more savvy marketing and technology professionals are turning toward services-based architectures."

**Cloud-Based Services** | As we move to bigger, broader or more targeted, personalized campaigns, we rely more on other types of data. In addition to our basic marketing-driven content, we find ourselves tapping into enterprise repositories of data and utilizing user-supplied data to create memorable, lasting user experiences that drive the brand.

Instead of the complex enterprise content management system, more savvy marketing and technology professionals are turning toward services-based architectures. These services tend to be a loose coalition of functionality that when harnessed together provide what we need, but aren't so dependent on each other that any small glitch causes the whole system to fail.

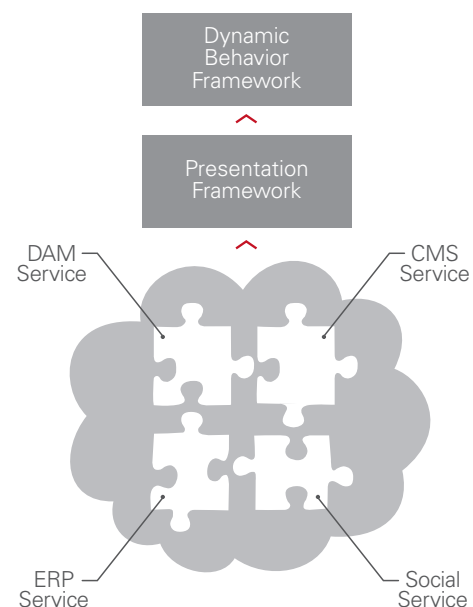
As the concepts of cloud computing and utility billed services come to maturity through things like PayPal and

Salesforce.com, we have the ability to use our own internal services or external providers to build, manage and maintain a complete system. With the separation of data (in the service layer) from the use of that data in the presentation layer, we gain the needed agility to bring new ideas and improvements to market quicker. Putting our service-based architecture into the cloud is another step in providing solutions faster and with more scalability.

Ultimately, it makes sense to find one solution to handle the whole set of activities we need to perform. Determining where to start, the level of sophistication needed to support the solution's evolution and what is needed today are important factors to consider.

If we take the service-based architecture approach one step further, a content management system that is service-based provides an excellent foundation and hub for our data needs. Fundamentally, it provides both the agility and scalability we need. We can start with the basics and implement it as a standard CMS, but the ability to add or grow services under the hood gives us the flexibility required for longer-term relevance.

#### Cloud-Based Services

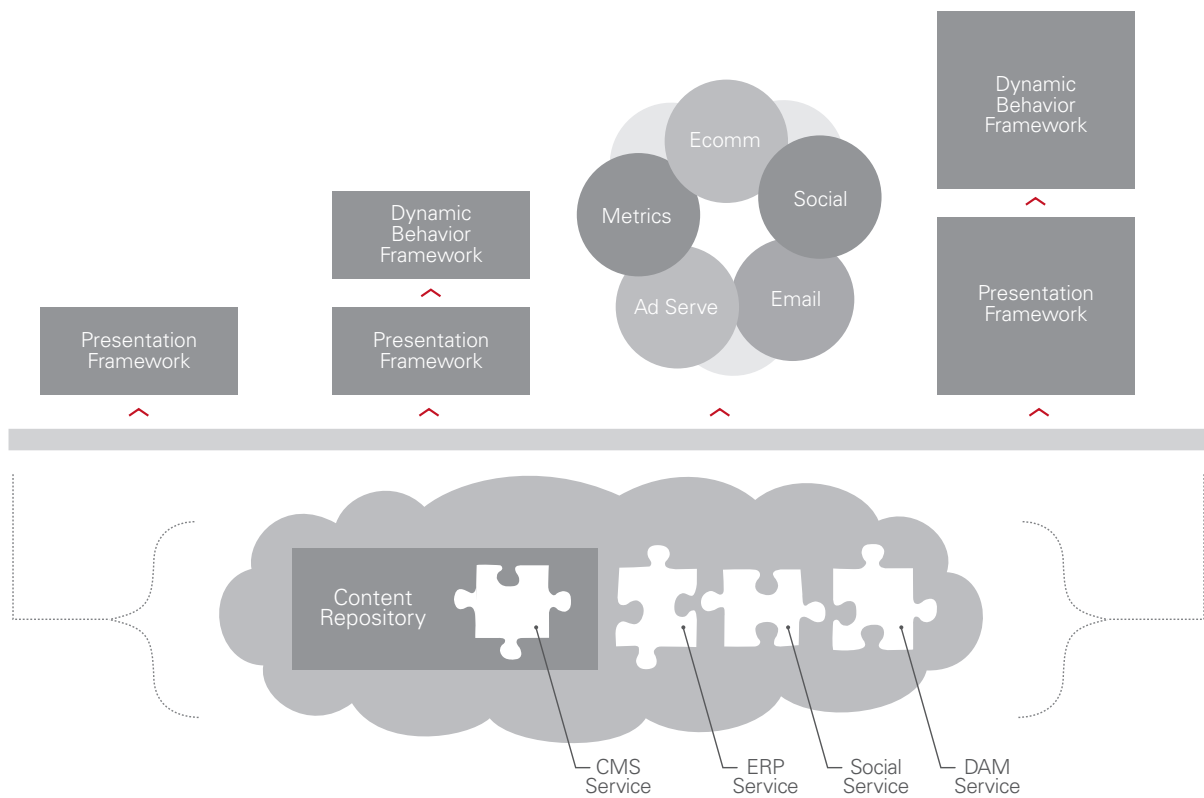


## Conclusion

The combination of service-based architecture, content management and cloud computing gives us more flexibility and power than ever in online marketing. The ability to divide and conquer the data to drive the user experience through the use of services partitions what can be an overwhelming and time-consuming exercise into small digestible chunks.

As we've made progress pushing enterprise data into the service layer, now putting content management into services pushes the envelope a little further. And putting that service layer into the cloud frees us up from worrying about data management. It gives the freedom to use that data to better our users' experiences and hence our brands.

### Service-Based Content Management



## About LEVEL Studios

LEVEL Studios is an independent digital agency that amplifies global brands by innovating across desktop, web and mobile environments. Founded in 1995, the agency now operates three California studios specializing in user experience, digital media and application development.