



# How to deliver digital experiences at the speed of opportunity

Learn how digital-first, digital-fast brands are aligning their people, playbook and platform



## Rise above the noise – and your competitors – by encouraging a builder-centric mindset

Digital is the new front door to every business around the world. Along with rapid digital transformation, consumer demands continue to evolve faster than the pace of traditional businesses.

This is creating opportunities for new, digital-first, digital-fast brands to capitalize on the lack of speed of incumbents – and in some cases, completely redefine markets. The businesses that survive and thrive will be those that redefine how they go to market.

As brands face disruption on multiple fronts, the digital strategies companies have relied on in the past will no longer provide the flexibility and adaptability needed to deliver customer experiences across the ever-expanding customer journey. Brands need to build new digital capabilities and adopt technologies with the goal not just to navigate disruption but to become disruptors themselves.

These new market conditions require digital-fast brands to adopt a new approach to their people, playbook and platform.



## The builder ethos: a new philosophy to empower your people

The [builder ethos](#) is a philosophy that recognizes that outstanding digital experiences start with those who build them. Twenty-first-century innovation doesn't happen in the boardroom at a 30,000-foot level, but on the digital shop floor, built by the people who work with your product daily.

**Yes, builders are developers, but they are also content creators, marketers, editors and designers. Builders are the people in your organization who are customer-obsessed – they invent and reinvent products and processes so they are able to deliver the best possible customer experiences.**

More than a role or set of responsibilities, the term “builder” refers to a state of mind that empowers people to do. It's a mindset that believes genius is not a result of one person's good idea but the delivery of that idea. The key is not having the good idea, but having the tools, flexibility and collaborative support systems to bring many good ideas to fruition, and to do so fast.

This is the future operating state of digital-first, digital-fast organizations. As Michel Feaster, CEO and co-founder of Usermind puts it, “The future of innovation is democratizing development. It's not having more developers code; it's getting non-technical people closer to the code.”

In the digital-first era, innovation flourishes when developers get closer to their customers to better empathize with their pain points and business users get closer to developers so they can change course, adapt and experiment faster with more tactical solutions.

## What makes a builder?

Builders are not defined by job titles, org charts or an ability to code. Writers don't need to learn how to code and developers don't need to write copy. Builders are defined by how they approach the experience they have and create.

**Builders are the doers in your company. They are power users of the technology and organizational systems that get things done.**

Developers, creatives and business users are each builders when they apply this shared mindset – not skillset – to all forms of problem solving, ideation and creation.

Power users are people who don't just operate technology as defined by a user manual but maximize the output of technology by augmenting it to fit their needs. Power users create the most impact with the greatest efficiency. This is the difference between someone who manually sorts their email inbox into neat and intuitive folders and someone who sets up a series of filters that automatically route emails as soon as they are received into the same folders. The first user is effective, the second user is a builder.



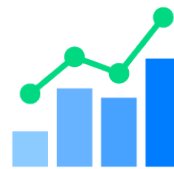
Along with pushing the limits of tech, competence and confidence are standard characteristics of builders. They possess the competence to expose problems and are empowered with the confidence to take immediate action toward the solution they deem best. Builders are not afraid to make mistakes and will opt to apologize later rather than miss an opportunity now. This is how companies test, fail, iterate, launch and refine their digital products to produce the best customer experiences.

This entrepreneurial spirit of builders is also unique in its motivations. Builders are motivated by prosocial and altruistic drivers. They know that for the things they build to be used, they have to be worthwhile. They have to provide value. For digital-first, digital-fast companies, this drives builders to create the best digital experiences for your customers.

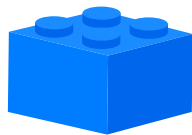
## Builder characteristics



**INQUISITIVE**



**DRIVEN**



**EXPERIMENTAL**



**SOLUTION-ORIENTED**

# The role of leadership: creating a culture of innovation

To embed a culture of innovation, business leaders need to recognize, hire and cultivate builders. In the words of Andy Jassy, CEO of Amazon Web Services, “Speed disproportionately matters in every business,” and to move quickly, “you have to make sure you hire builders.”

## 1. Invest in the new and the experienced

Hiring builders starts with funding roles for builders. Managers need to be trained on the builder ethos and how to identify candidates who embody it. It also includes supporting the continuing education of existing employees so they can become better builders.

## 2. Support curiosity, risk-taking and experimentation

Next, you have to retain your talent. Builders work best when they are given permission to break things, take risks, fail fast and pivot as necessary to be leaders in emerging markets. This spirit of innovation helps attract and retain engineering and creative talent, but also supports organizational alignment on a cultural level. A safe and supportive space empowers people to ask questions, connect unexpected dots and build fearlessly.

## 3. Create space for interdisciplinary connections

Along with permission, a culture of innovation requires access to information, data and interdepartmental collaborators. This type of collaboration must come from the top.

The traditional elimination of departmental silos is the beginning, not the end, of collaboration. Yes, leaders need to remove blockers for cross-functional team alignment, but they also need to set the tone from the top that cross-functionality is expected. This gives teams permission to work on shared goals and commit creative calories to solve problems that extend outside their departmental boundaries.

## 4. Knockdown silos and ceilings

Effective leaders take the builder ethos a step further when they encourage lateral cross-functional collaboration and upward collaboration. Builders need access to the leadership of the various teams and agencies they work with. Open door policies with leadership ensure information isn't locked behind departmental or hierarchical silos. [Watch the webinar \*Aligning for Rapid Growth: Executive insights on digital transformation\*](#), to find out how Align Technology recognized and eliminated internal silos to encourage team-wide collaboration.

## Digital factories: activating the builder ethos with the right playbook

A digital factory is a framework designed to effectively combine the skills and outputs of digital teams operating under the builder ethos. It provides the [processes and playbook for cross-functional teams](#) to collaborate and produce scalable and reusable solutions.

Digital factories have also been called digital labs, innovation centers, DX studios and customer journey labs, among other things. No matter the name, the framework is the same: create a space, physical or digital, that decreases the distance between builders, and closes the gap between builders and customers.

Digital factories focus on the products that are being created rather than on the channels where those products will be distributed. Focusing on digital channels embeds a waterfall, rather than agile, workflow approach. When focusing on those channels, workflows become more linear as individual actions mirror the distance each team member has from each channel. This creates scenarios that rely on inefficient workflow handoffs that embed periods of waiting into what should be uninterrupted production and deployment processes.

**The goal of a digital factory is to create a framework for builders – developers, creatives and business users alike – to do what they are best at in every moment. No waiting.**

Digital factories activate the builder ethos by rewarding building, not necessarily what is built. When businesses have too much invested – time, money, expectations – in what is built, it creates bloated development cycles and extends the dependency on legacy tools and processes long after they stopped providing value.

## How to build a digital factory

Digital factories organize builders from across the company under one roof – figuratively or literally – with the shared goal of shipping new digital products faster through continuous iteration and deployment.

### CREATE PARALLEL WORKFLOWS

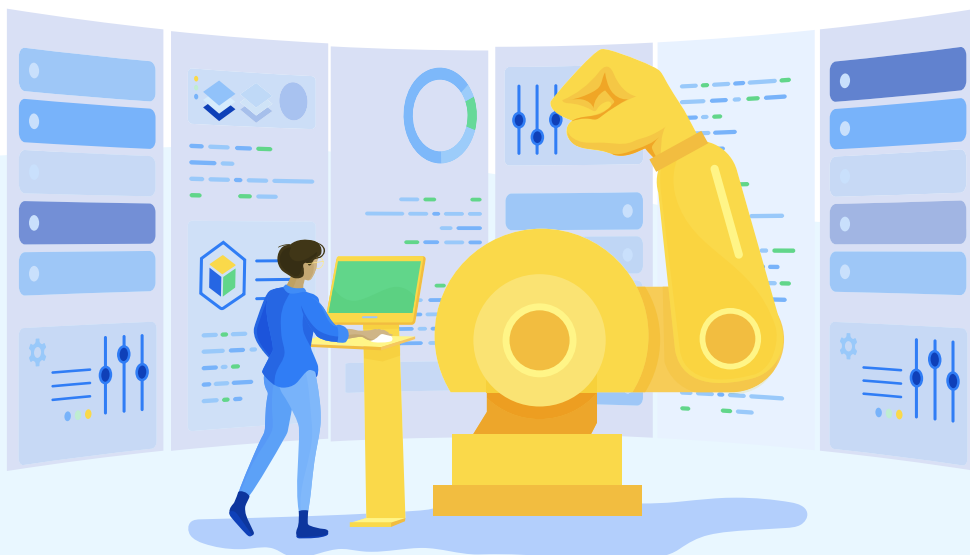
Decoupling platform and experience teams allows both to build simultaneously. This is the same environment that drives agile teams and kanban teams designed to eliminate linear workflow inefficiencies. The digital factory employs these [agile team structures](#) and focuses their output on digital products.

### STEP AWAY FROM SILOS

Parallel workflows elevate information out of silos and create unique lines of visibility for builders to identify and solve problems. After all, you don't know what you don't know. In the modern world of cloud-based operations, it's more likely you don't know what you do know because information, data and ideas are obscured by a lack of cross-functional visibility.

Digital factories create implicit and explicit visibility so that builders can create autonomously, inform effortlessly and contribute holistically. All of the above is in service of speed – speed to launch, speed to test, speed to iterate, speed to market.

Looking for inspiration to jumpstart your digital factory adoption? [See how Shawn Mandel, CDO of Cineplex, built a digital factory.](#)





## Agile technology: giving builders the right tools

Tools are the catalyst for innovation. When given better, unopinionated tools, builders will adopt them and transform their output to fit the immediate and future needs of a company

Oscar Wilde once said, "language...is the parent and not the child of thought." Similarly, technology can be the parent, not the child of innovation. That is, when all you have is a hammer, everything will look like a nail. Problem solving will always require brute force. However, when you have adaptable, customizable technologies, solutions are designed to fit the problem.

The digital-first, digital-fast era requires companies to reevaluate the technologies on which their products and digital experience are built. As Werner Vogels, CTO of AWS, [said at the AWS 2020 Summit](#), "The unprecedented time has forced many companies to look inward, especially at their fundamental technologies."

**Flexible, scalable and fundamental technology improves not just what you do, but how you do it. It's transformative rather than incremental.**

It's becoming clear that the future of fundamental technology is not in do-everything monolithic services. While monolithic services offer a litany of functionality, they force builders to create and deploy in prescribed ways. Prescription stifles innovation.

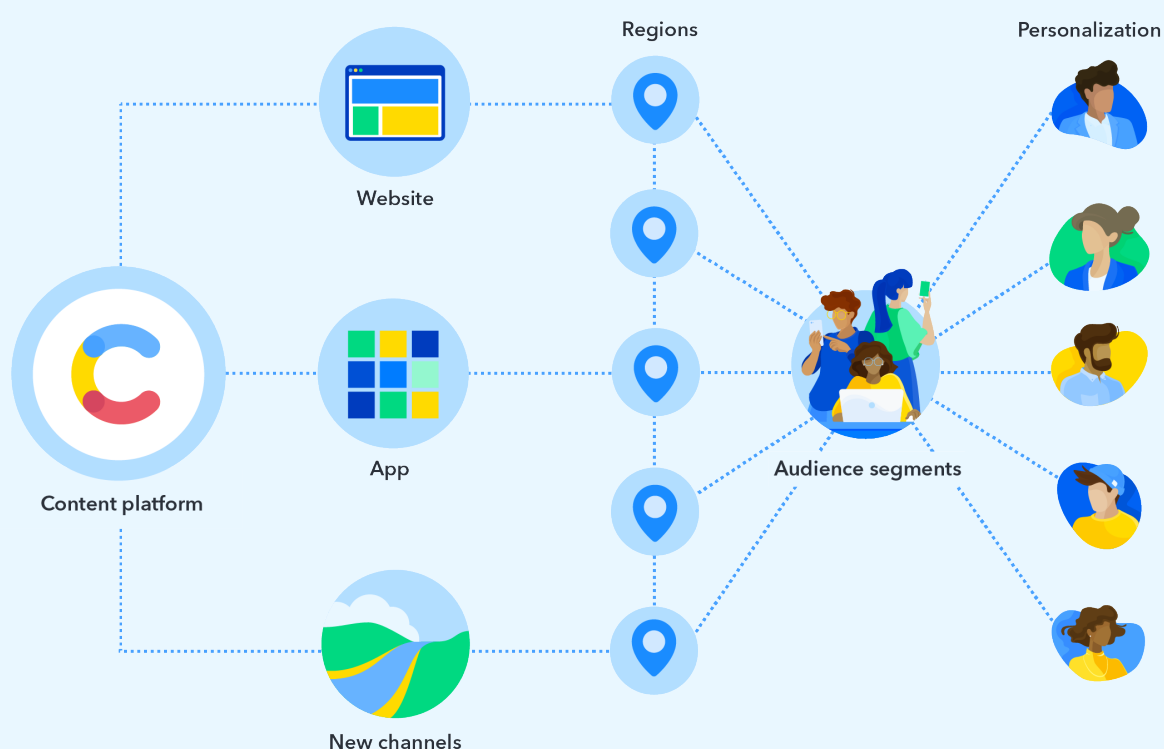
Tools that are catalysts for innovation are unifying rather than exclusionary. They connect seamlessly across preferred tech stacks the same way builders connect ideas across digital factories.

# A content platform: the fundamental technology for digital customer experiences

Content is the currency of the digital-first, digital-fast era. It is what powers the digital customer experience. A content platform allows you to [deliver these experiences at the scale your business needs](#) and at the speed your customers want.

A builder-centric, API-first content platform is the foundation upon which the modern content and digital ecosystem is built and integrated. A content platform lets you build and connect your products and services, while creating a unifying layer for data and content that can be distributed anywhere with easy-to-use APIs.

Like other fundamental technologies, a content platform enables businesses with scalability that is transformative rather than incremental. It helps digital teams assemble content and deliver experiences faster. It offers an open platform that adapts to how digital builders work to meet business goals, through easy customization and deep integration with any tech stack. With this type of flexibility, digital factories can deliver value to customers faster by orchestrating digital experience delivery at scale by aggregating, structuring and delivering content across an organization's entire digital footprint.



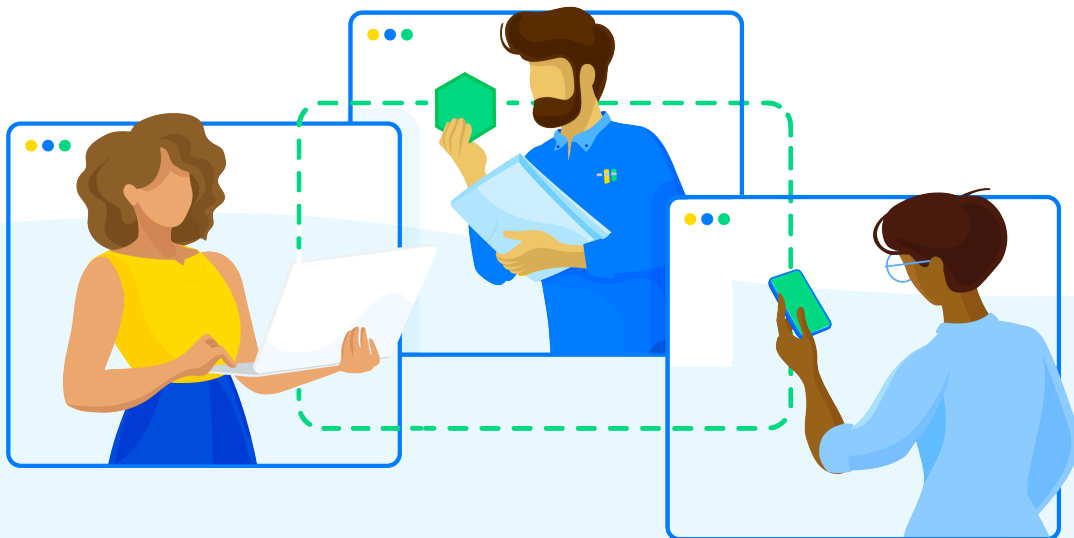
With a fully adaptable, open and modular set of capabilities – and portfolio of flexible APIs – [Contentful's content platform](#) enables cross-functional teams to streamline operations with a customizable set of developer and editorial tools. Contentful's open and extensible [App Framework](#) offers a programmable interface (with deep UI customization), advanced content automation on the backend and seamless integration with other services – ensuring the platform can be adapted to the needs of your builders and digital factories. This lets digital teams quickly build the capabilities they need, whether it's by extending the platform or integrating with existing services.

[Learn how to evaluate digital content platforms to find the perfect fit.](#)

## Bringing together your people, playbook and platform

The digital-first, digital-fast era is forcing organizations to innovate at the speed of opportunity – to disrupt or be disrupted. This requires companies to adopt a new operating philosophy in the builder ethos to empower digital teams to build fearlessly. Once builders are empowered, they need to be aligned within a future-focused playbook that embeds cross-functional support in the form of digital factories. Lastly, with the right people and the right framework, innovation requires the right tools to deploy quickly and consistently.

The right people, playbook and platform will position any company – disruptors and incumbents alike – to seize the opportunity with the best digital experience for their customers at a speed that outpaces the competition.



# Take a peek at how Contentful can help your team innovate and iterate in record time.

[Request a demo](#)

