

The CMS Market Map *2025*

A practical guide for digital agencies to
choose the right CMS for every project



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|---|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | Introduction | 5 | Understanding the five CMS categories |
| 2 | The two driving forces reshaping the CMS landscape | 6 | How to use the Market Map |
| 3 | How to make sense of today's CMS landscape? | 7 | What's next for CMSs |
| 4 | Introducing the CMS Market Map | 8 | Where Prepr fits in |

1. Introduction

Why CMS decisions are harder than ever

Choosing the right CMS has never been more difficult — or more critical. You've seen the demos, heard the buzzwords, and read the listicles. But every project is different, and the tech keeps evolving — fast.

What teams need is clarity. A way to match tools to their goals and setup — while making future-ready choices that align with modern web development.

What this guide will help you do

The CMS Market Map helps you make smarter CMS choices — ones that match your project goals and reflect today's best practices in modern web development.

- How to match CMS types to project goals and complexity
- The five key categories shaping the market
- Where trends like composability, personalization, and AI are headed
- How to choose with clarity — not just feature lists

2. The two driving forces reshaping the CMS landscape

A decorative graphic consisting of two overlapping circles, one slightly behind and to the right of the other, both rendered in a lighter shade of blue than the background.

Two shifts that redefine how teams choose CMS platforms

The CMS market hasn't grown randomly — it's been shaped by two powerful shifts in how digital teams build for the web. These shifts explain why new categories have emerged, why older platforms are falling behind, and why some tools just feel like a better fit for modern projects.

Driving force 1

The rise of composable architecture

In the past, most websites were built on monolithic platforms – all-in-one systems that handled content, front end, templates, and extensions. They worked well when teams needed simple sites and limited flexibility.

But as digital experiences became more complex, those bundled platforms became blockers. Teams wanted to move faster, design freely, and choose best-in-class tools – not be locked into a single vendor's stack.

That's how composable architecture took off.

Instead of relying on one large system, composable teams build their stack from smaller, specialized tools:

- A CMS for content
- A custom front end
- Analytics, search, A/B testing, personalization, CDP – all integrated via APIs

This shift opened the door for headless CMSs, headless commerce, and other modular tools that play nicely together. It also marked the beginning of a broader movement: choosing flexibility over convenience.

Today, composability is the go-to approach for medium to large web projects – especially where performance, scalability, and brand control matter.

Driving force 2

The rise of data-driven headless CMSs

While developers were leading the move to composable stacks, marketers were facing a different challenge.

They didn't just want to publish content — they wanted to make it perform. That meant:

- Testing messages and layouts
- Personalizing content to different audiences
- Tracking performance and optimizing on the fly

For years, the only way to do that was through bloated digital experience platforms (DXPs) or by stitching together multiple tools — CMS, CDP, testing platforms,

analytics engines — each adding friction, cost, and complexity.

But now, a new category has emerged: data-driven headless CMSs. These platforms combine the flexibility of headless architecture with built-in tools for personalization, segmentation, A/B testing, and content performance insights — all in one system.

These tools blend the flexibility of headless architecture with the built-in capabilities marketers care about most — like segmentation, personalization, and real-time testing.

No more stitching. No more workarounds. Just structured content + performance tools, in one place.

3.

How to make sense
of today's CMS landscape?

Start with your project's purpose and complexity

The best CMS choice depends on what you're building and how complex the project is. That's why the CMS Market Map starts with two simple questions:

- What kind of website are you building?
- How complex is your project?

Let's look at these questions in more detail.

What kind of website are you building?

Most projects fall into one of four categories. Each type comes with different needs around structure, design, and content delivery.

- **Corporate** – A company's main online presence. Often includes team pages, news, jobs, and vision statements.
- **Content-heavy** – Platforms that publish at scale: blogs, media sites, resource libraries, or knowledge hubs.
- **Lead-gen** – Focused on turning traffic into conversions. Often part of a product or marketing funnel.
- **Commerce** – Designed to sell products or services online. Includes storefronts, carts, and transactional flows.



Corporate Website



Content Website



Lead-gen Website



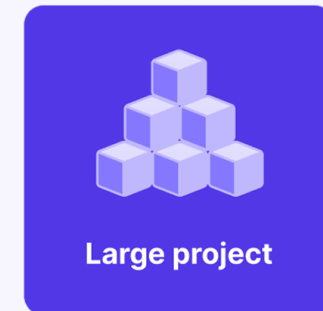
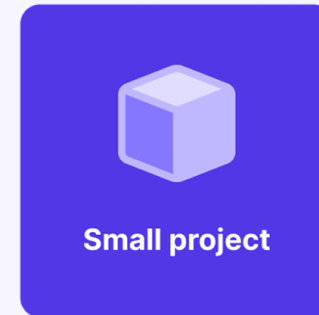
Commerce Website

How complex is your project?

Project size affects everything — from how fast you can go live to how scalable your setup needs to be.

- **Small** – One language, one team, limited content types. Requires minimal or no development.
- **Medium** – Multiple pages, contributors, and integrations (e.g. CRM, analytics, forms). Requires development effort.
- **Large** – Multi-language, multi-brand, multi-team. Requires extensive development and integration with marketing, data, or e-commerce systems.

These two questions define your needs — and give you a clear starting point for choosing a CMS.



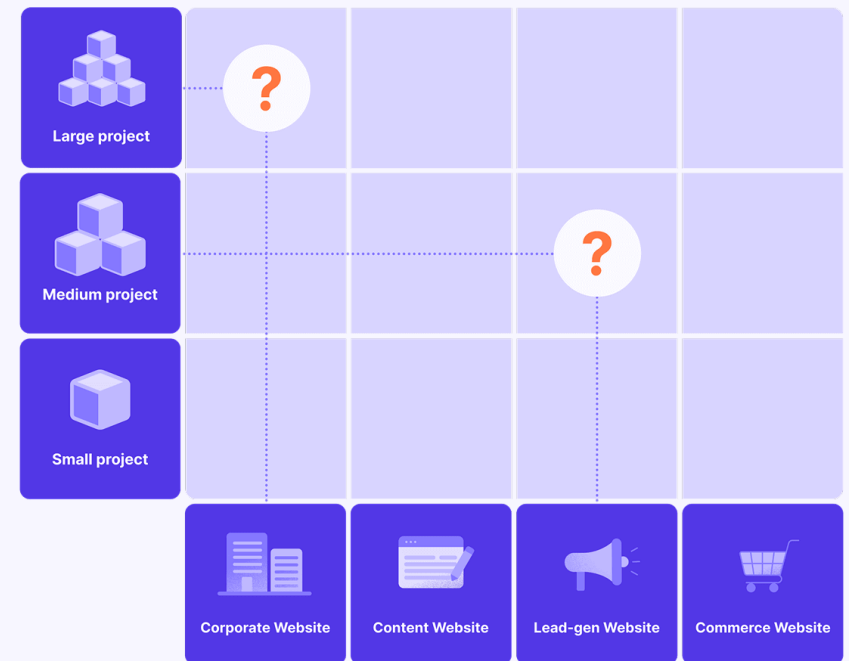
Map your project before you pick a CMS

The CMS Market Map turns your project input into practical insight. This 3x4 grid helps you place your project based on its size and type – so you can focus on the kinds of CMS platforms actually built for the job.

Each square represents a different kind of project. For example:

- A large corporate website will land in the top-left.
- A mid-sized lead-gen site might sit closer to the center.

This model gives you a solid foundation. In the next section, we'll layer the CMS categories onto this grid – and explore how each one aligns with real-world project needs.



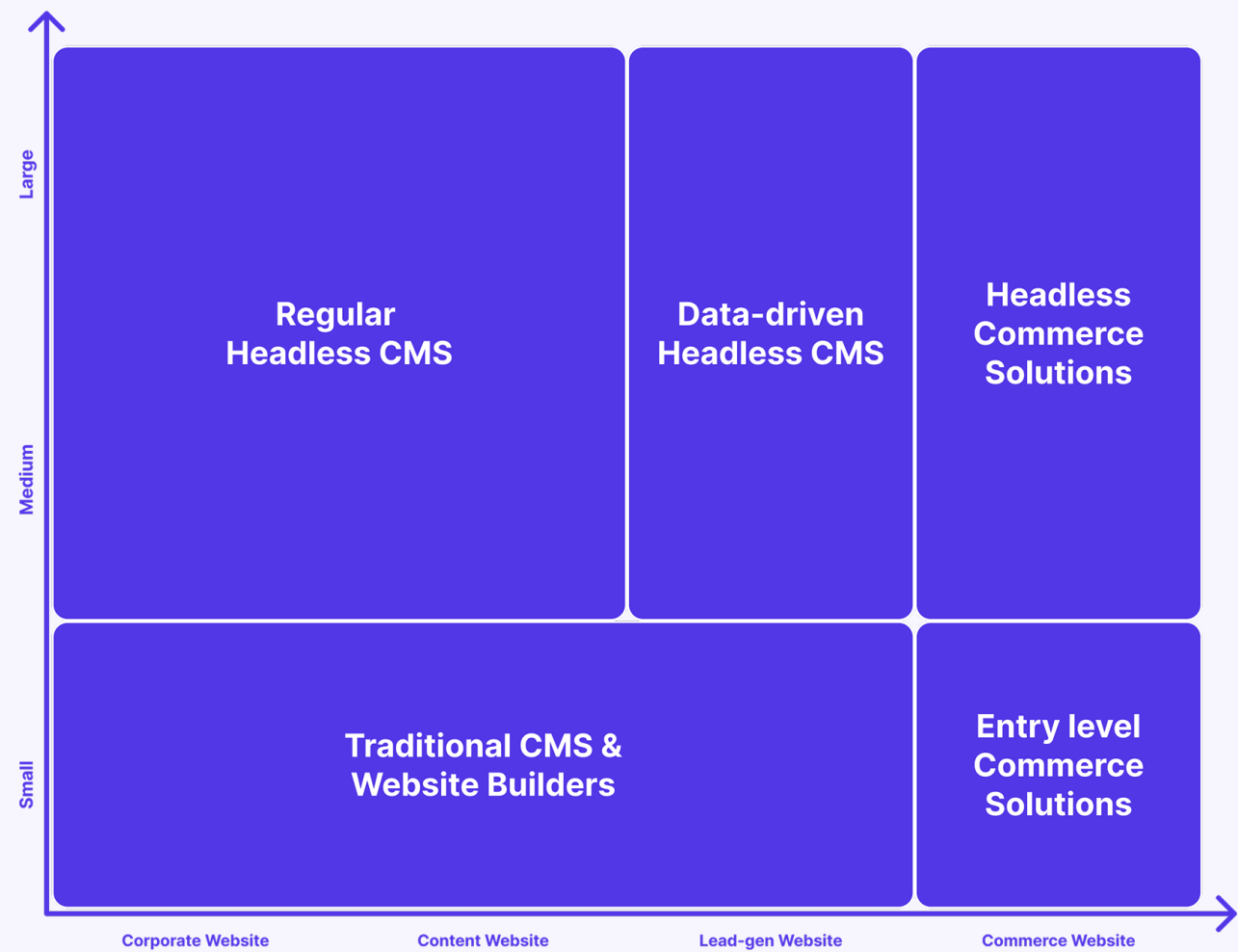
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Introducing the CMS Market Map

The CMS Market Map

This visual model brings clarity to a fragmented market. It's not a complete catalog of every CMS out there, but a curated framework that reflects the best practices we see in modern web development.

It shows how five key CMS categories align with real-world project needs, helping you quickly spot which types of platforms are built for which kinds of jobs.



A visual overview of the CMS landscape, mapped by project size (vertical) and website type (horizontal). Each category reflects a distinct approach to modern content and commerce needs.

Five distinct CMS categories

Traditional CMS and website builders

All-in-one platforms like WordPress and Webflow. Great for quick launches with minimal development, but often limited in flexibility and scale.

Regular headless CMS

Designed for modern dev teams using composable architectures. These platforms separate content from presentation for full front-end control. Examples include Storyblok and Sanity.

Entry-level commerce platforms

Tools like Shopify and Wix eCommerce. Easy to launch and manage for early-stage commerce, but may fall short on content flexibility or scale as needs grow.

Headless commerce platforms

Built for larger e-commerce sites. They decouple front end from product logic for high performance and advanced merchandising. Examples: Commerce Layer and Elastic Path.

Data-driven headless CMS

A newer category that combines headless architecture with built-in tools for personalization, A/B testing, and performance insights. Examples: Contentful and Prepr.

5.

Understanding the five CMS categories

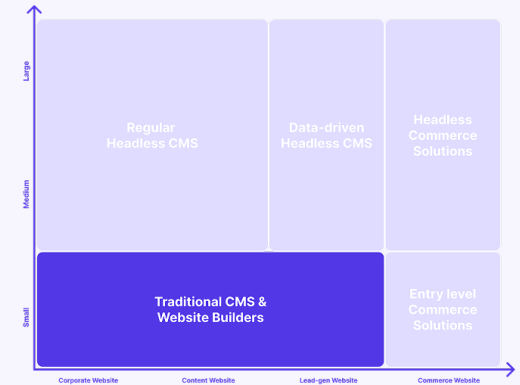


Each category reflects a different way to build for the web

Each category on the map represents a different type of CMS — shaped by changing technology, user needs, and market trends. By understanding what defines each category, and how it fits different project needs, you'll be able to quickly shortlist the right tools for any brief.

Traditional CMS & website builders

These all-in-one platforms were built for quick setup and simple management. As web publishing took off – and no-code tools matured – they gave non-technical users a way to launch and run sites without writing code.



Best for

Small business sites, simple corporate sites, MVPs

Example CMSs

WordPress, Webflow, Wix, Squarespace, Craft CMS

Pros

Easy to set up and manage • Huge plugin/theme ecosystems • Low technical barrier • Fast to launch

Cons

Limited flexibility as projects grow • Difficult to scale across brands • Coupled front ends restrict design • Performance and security can require workarounds

Regular headless CMS

Headless CMSs emerged as a direct response to the rise of composable architecture—one of the two major shifts reshaping the CMS market.

As digital teams moved away from monolithic platforms, they needed flexible tools that separated content from presentation. Headless CMSs made that possible, delivering content via APIs and giving developers full control over how and where it gets displayed.

Best for

Content-rich, multi-platform projects with modern front ends

Example CMSs

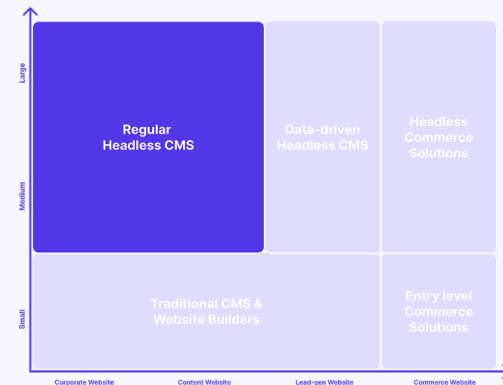
Kontent.ai, Sanity, Storyblok, Strapi, Dato CMS

Pros

Full front-end freedom • Great for structured content • Easily integrates with dev tools and frameworks • Scales well with content complexity

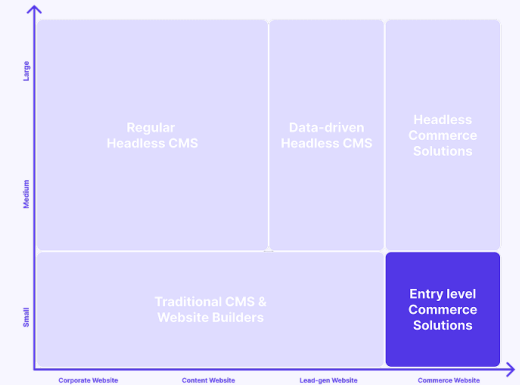
Cons

Requires a separate front-end build • No built-in personalization or A/B testing • Can overwhelm non-technical users • Preview and collaboration features vary



Entry-level commerce platforms

These platforms were born from the explosion of no-code tools and the growing demand for fast, accessible e-commerce. They offer a bundled way to sell online with built-in storefronts, but often at the expense of flexibility and content depth.



Best for

Small shops and fast-to-launch e-commerce websites

Example CMSs

Shopify, Wix eCommerce, WooCommerce

Pros

Fast setup with pre-built components
• Integrated payments, carts, and product management
• Easy to use for non-technical teams
• All-in-one hosting and security

Cons

Limited design flexibility • Poor content modeling and customization
• Not suitable for multi-region or complex product catalogs
• May require plugins to add basic features

Headless commerce solutions

As digital retail became more complex, teams needed the same flexibility in commerce that they had gained in content. That’s why headless commerce platforms emerged – as part of the broader shift toward composable architecture (see Driving Force 1).

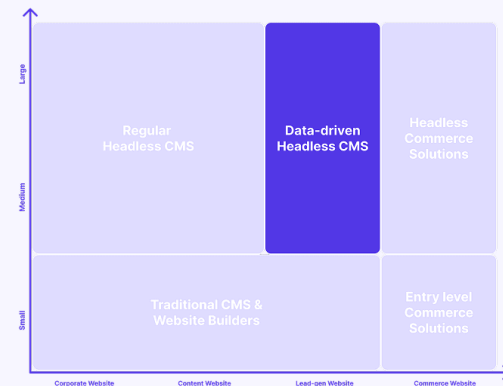
These platforms separate product logic from front-end design, enabling high-performance, personalized shopping experiences.



Best for	Example CMSs	Pros	Cons
Mid to large-scale e-commerce platforms with custom UX	Commerce Layer, BigCommerce (headless), Elastic Path, Swell	High performance and scalability • Freedom to design and build custom front ends • Flexible product and pricing models • Works across websites, apps, kiosks, and more	Setup and orchestration can be complex • Not ideal for teams without dev capacity • Content and commerce live in separate systems

Data-driven headless CMS

This emerging category is a direct response to Driving Force 2: the shift from content management to content performance. Data-driven headless CMSs combine the flexibility of headless architecture with built-in tools for personalization, segmentation, and real-time optimization. They reflect the growing demand for CMSs that don't just publish content — they continuously improve how it performs.



Best for

Lead-gen, content-commerce, and marketing platforms

Example CMSs

Prepr, Contentful, Contentstack

Pros

Headless flexibility + integrated targeting tools • Built-in A/B testing and personalization • Content performance insights at the source • Reduces need for external CDPs and testing tools

Cons

Less suited for ultra-complex enterprise platform orchestration • Requires some mindset shift for dev + content teams • Fewer vendors to choose from (but growing)

The CMS landscape for modern web development at a glance

Here's how today's most common CMS platforms compare — based on project complexity and website type. On the next page, you'll find a visual overview to help you position tools, compare categories, and align your CMS choice with your client's real needs.



A snapshot of today's CMS landscape, showing how popular platforms align to project size and website type. Use this view to compare tools within and across categories.

6.

How to use the market map

Use these 3 steps to move from CMS confusion to clarity

Whether you're planning a new website, auditing an existing setup, or pitching to a client — this framework helps you move from CMS confusion to CMS clarity.

Here's how to use it in three simple steps. Let's walk through each one.

Step 1: Map your project's position

Go back to the two key questions:

- What type of website are you building?
- How complex is the project?

Use these to place your project on the 3x4 grid. That location gives you a strong starting point for understanding which categories are built for your kind of work.

For example:

- A small corporate website likely fits in the traditional CMS category.
- A medium-sized lead-gen platform may point toward a data-driven headless CMS.

It's not about perfection — it's about quickly narrowing the field.

**1.
Map your
project's
position**

Step 2: Filter on project-specific needs

Once you've identified the right category, start narrowing the field by focusing on what this project really needs.

Look beyond generic feature lists and consider:

- What's the expected team workflow – developer-led or marketer-driven?
- What integrations are critical – CRM, CDP, analytics?
- Do you need something fast to launch, or something built to scale?

This step helps you filter the landscape down to just a few tools that actually fit your technical and business context.

**2.
Filter on
project-
specific
needs**

Step 3: Validate shortlist with a PoC

Don't make a platform decision based on a website — make it based on your website.

Set up a lightweight proof of concept (PoC) using 1–2 shortlisted tools.

Build a basic content model, try out a key integration, or replicate a workflow your team uses daily. You'll get a much clearer sense of how it fits — and whether it delivers on its promises.

The proof is in the building. This step gives you confidence that your final choice is the right one.

**3.
Validate
shortlist with
Proof of
Concept**

7.

What's next for CMSs

Three forces shaping the future

You've seen the current landscape. You've matched CMS types to project needs. But the market isn't standing still — and neither are your clients.

New expectations are changing how CMSs are built, what features they offer, and which platforms will still be relevant in a few years.

AI in the CMS: Less friction, more output

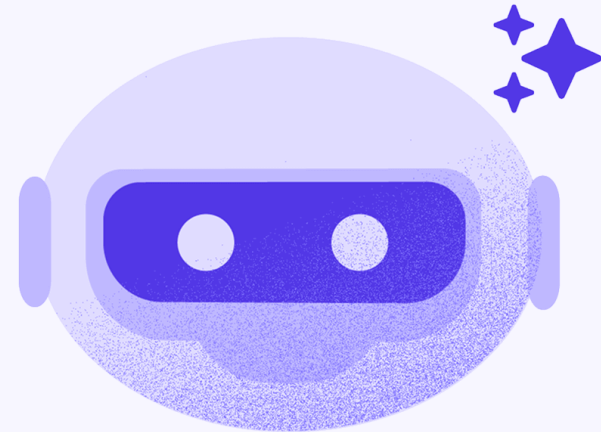
CMSs have always been about managing content — but now they're starting to help create it, too.

With AI built into the CMS itself, teams can write faster, localize content on the fly, summarize long-form articles, and even optimize structure. What used to take hours can now happen in minutes — without leaving the platform.

That means more output, less bottlenecking, and content that keeps up with your campaigns.

This isn't just about speed. It's about making content teams more autonomous, freeing developers from routine tasks, and helping organizations publish at scale without adding headcount.

Now expected as standard, not a bonus.



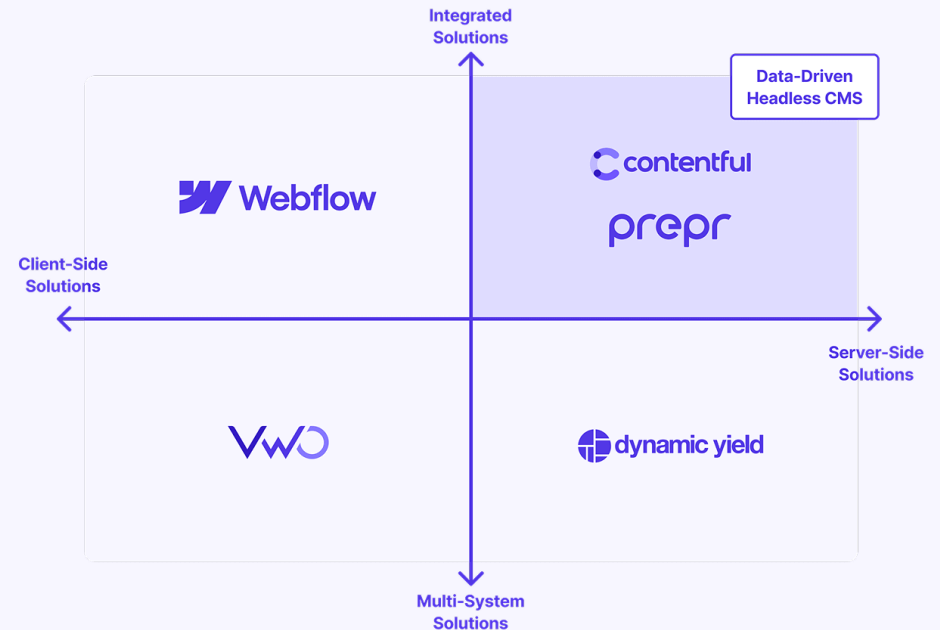
Personalization is moving into the CMS

Personalization used to live outside the CMS — in front-end scripts, CDPs, and marketing automation tools. But that model is changing fast.

Modern teams want to deliver tailored experiences directly from their CMS. That means segmentation, targeting, and A/B testing shouldn't require five separate tools and a complex integration roadmap.

Today's leading platforms are starting to handle this inside the CMS — making it faster to build, easier to maintain, and more consistent across channels.

This shift is a big reason why data-driven CMSs are gaining ground: they bring personalization and content into one workflow.



Simpler stacks are winning

As digital teams aim to move faster and do more with less, complexity has become the enemy.

Managing five interconnected tools — CMS, CDP, testing, personalization, analytics — creates friction, cost, and risk. Especially for mid-sized projects, the overhead just isn't worth it.

That's why many teams are now choosing platforms that do more out of the box. Integrated personalization. Built-in testing. Real-time performance data.

Data-driven CMSs aren't trying to replace everything — but they're consolidating the stack in ways that make real-world teams faster, leaner, and more effective.

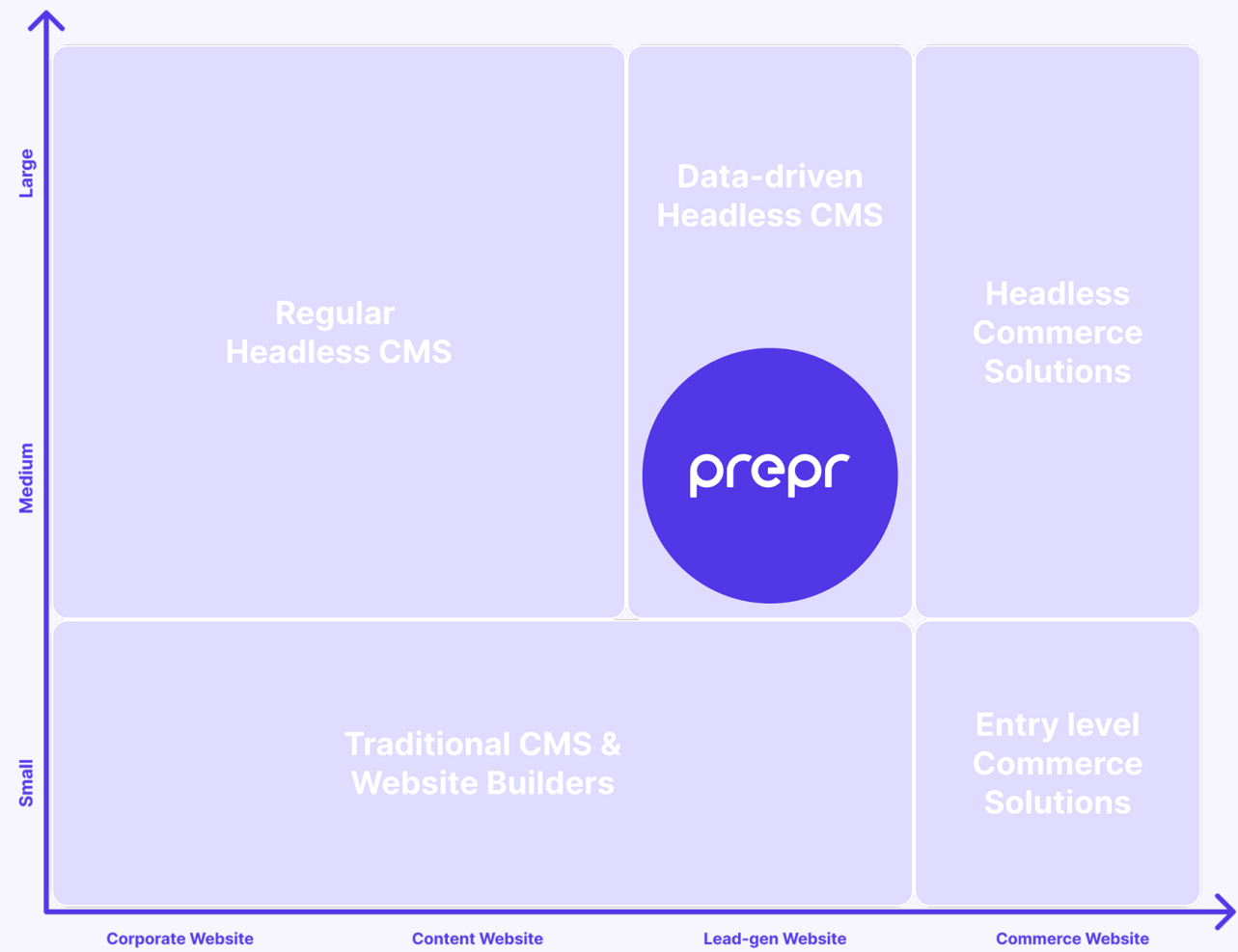


8.

Where Prepr fits in

A modern choice for teams who care about results

Prepr is part of a new generation of CMS platforms designed for modern marketing goals — especially lead-gen. In this section, we'll show how it fits into the CMS Market Map, and why it's such a strong match for teams that want both headless flexibility and measurable results.



Prepr is positioned as a mid-market, performance-focused solution for lead-gen and marketing teams.

The headless CMS for lead-gen websites

Prepr is part of a new generation of data-driven CMSs — built for teams that need to launch fast, personalize deeply, and optimize continuously.

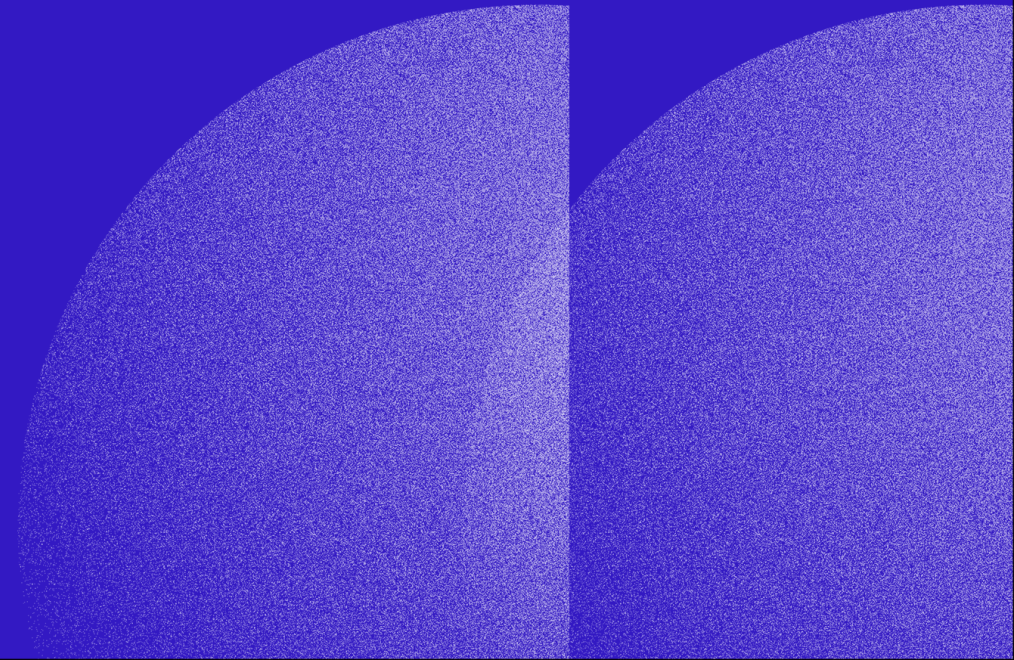
It combines structured content delivery with built-in tools for segmentation, personalization, A/B testing, and performance insights. That means less stitching, fewer add-ons, and more measurable results — all in one headless platform.

Why digital teams choose Prepr

- **Headless by design** – Fully API-first and developer-friendly
- **Built-in personalization** – Target segments without extra tools
- **Real-time A/B testing** – Optimize content as you go
- **Performance insights** – See what works, and why
- **AI-assisted workflows** – Speed up content creation

For modern agencies, Prepr isn't just a CMS — it's a ready-to-go performance platform.

9. Final thoughts



It's not about the “best” CMS — it's about the right one

With so many CMS platforms on the market, it's easy to get lost in comparison charts, feature lists, and buzzwords. But the most successful teams don't look for the “best” CMS — they look for the right fit.

Use this guide to choose with confidence

The CMS Market Map gives you a simple, structured way to cut through the noise. It helps you match platforms to real project needs — based on goals, complexity, and collaboration style.

Use this guide to:

- Align internally on what your project actually needs
- Narrow the field before evaluating vendors
- Support your CMS recommendation in a pitch or proposal
- Reframe platform conversations around outcomes, not features

And when your next project calls for structured content, built-in personalization, and performance that drives growth?

You'll know where to look.

Explore Prepr to see how a data-driven headless CMS can help your team create smarter, faster, and with more impact.

See what a data-driven CMS looks like in action. Visit prepr.io

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