



Why upgrade to Optimizely CMS 12?

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As an Optimizely Most Valued Professional (OMVP) Justin is part of an exclusive group of respected experts in the platform. An advocate of “building the right things right” he combines his extensive experience, technical knowledge and strategic thinking to ensure our clients realise their digital vision and full value from Optimizely. Justin is a member of the exclusive Optimizely Partner Advisory Board.

Why should you upgrade to CMS 12?

Upgrading to the latest version of any software is typically considered good practice. However, sometimes upgrades are simple, quick and barely noticeable and sometimes those upgrades are much more substantial, feature rich and require a greater investment of time and effort.

When Optimizely released the long awaited CMS 12, there wasn't the usual rush, or indeed push, to upgrade. The release came with a fanfare around significant performance improvements both for internal and end users. And, let's be clear, that fanfare stands up, CMS 12 is significantly faster.

There was, and still is, much talk around CMS 12 using the latest version of .NET (ASP.NET Core) and Optimizely now being infrastructure agnostic. ASP.NET Core is part of the reason why CMS 12 is faster. And being infrastructure agnostic is a benefit to some, though a significant volume of Optimizely customers rightly use Optimizely's DXP fully managed service. Therefore what infrastructure Optimizely is running on is largely a moot point.

So, why should you consider upgrading to CMS 12 sooner rather than later?

Let's get the basics out of the way:

- Faster is better. Faster performance of the editor UI, faster page load times and therefore better user experiences. Who doesn't want their digital products to be faster?
- New Optimizely features, and compatibility with the rest of the Optimizely ecosystem, will undoubtedly be better supported in CMS 12 with new features built only for CMS 12+.
- One day, not in the near future, Microsoft will stop supporting the older version of .NET that previous versions of CMS utilised and, one day, Optimizely will stop supporting older versions of CMS prior to 12. Neither of these are, today, a pressing issue however upgrading is future proofing.

These are solid basics. However, these alone don't drive business outcomes or justify the investment to upgrade to CMS 12. The investment in this upgrade is more significant than a typical upgrade – fact. The underlying code changes required mean that there is more developer effort required and the more developer effort, the greater the testing effort. Optimizely released their upgrade tooling which certainly helps, though it can't cater for every possible scenario associated with an upgrade.

At Netcel, we're very clear that each and every investment should have a measurable outcome. With this in mind, we wanted to explain the themes of how we view the key benefits of upgrading to CMS 12, beyond the reasons associated with just the tech (though there are a few).

The opportunity for optimisation

Digital products, websites, built and maintained over a number of years can, without careful management, find themselves in a position where they are bloated. Full of features and logic that was deemed high priority and relevant originally but has slowly become redundant. Or indeed, full of features that were deemed at the outset as "must haves", that were not qualified or quantified fully, driven by the HIPPO (highest paid person's opinion). These excess features create legacy technical debt. Technical debt that increases the total cost of ownership with increased maintenance and a testing overhead each time upgrades or new features are rolled out. They also can result in the digital product operating that bit slower. Slower for the teams working with the digital product and slower for the end users.

When you reach a divergent point, as CMS 12 arguably is, we feel that this is an appropriate juncture to consider optimising the digital product and removing those overly complex business rules that add little or no value and are rarely used. An opportunity to reduce unused features that just add to the maintenance overhead. It's also an opportunity to streamline certain aspects such as integrations that will have been changed and added to over the years.

Fundamentally, whilst not quite starting again, an opportunity such as an upgrade to CMS 12 is the chance to focus truly on what really matters to your business users and your end users and create a lean, efficient and high performing digital product and remove that legacy technical debt.

Future proofing

Optimisation is a great thing. However, the CMS 12 upgrade also provides the opportunity to future proof the solution. With any digital product that we build, it's difficult to future proof for forevermore. However, if you're running a version of Optimizely's CMS that is prior to version 12, the chances are it's at least a few years old. Technology moves at a rapid pace of change and we see this affecting websites continuously, especially in the area of modern web browsers across different screen sizes. A CMS 12 upgrade is a great opportunity to ensure that the digital products in place today meet modern standards.

And, in reality, all of the great new features Optimizely are and will be releasing across their entire portfolio of products, including the Optimizely Data Platform, Experimentation and Content Marketing Platform are going to be delivered for CMS 12. The Optimizely DXP presents massive opportunities for digital maturity within any organisation and to be able to take advantage of the future direction and capabilities this will bring, being on the latest version is a must.

Compliance

In the world we live in today, sustainability is ever increasing in importance for organisations. Our carbon footprint is important. Upgrading to CMS 12 will improve sustainability. A faster, more performant solution, will be more energy efficient therefore reducing the carbon footprint both for the infrastructure hosting the digital product and for the end user. That's a win-win.

Additionally, the upgrade provides an opportunity for increased levels of compliance. Whether that's complying with Core Web Vitals, the introduction of better GA4 compatibility or taking the opportunity to improve accessibility compliance. All these important measures of compliance can see metric improvements with a leaner, faster, more efficient and compliant site.

And, we mustn't forget security. As with any software, the latest version will always be maintained from a security perspective first. CMS 12 will have been most recently and more rigorously tested for security vulnerabilities. That's not to say earlier versions are vulnerable. However, it's more likely to see an improved security posture with CMS 12.

Headless

One further area of benefit is in the consideration around a headless architecture. The pros and cons of considering a pureplay headless architecture are a conversation for another day. However, there is no doubt that we're seeing all DXP vendors having to consider the benefits of a headless API architecture principle. Equally, many headless vendors are releasing capabilities more traditionally seen in platforms such as Optimizely.

CMS 12 brings the benefits of both a "monolithic" approach and a fully API first headless architecture with the headless suite. CMS 12's support for this scenario is greatly improved over previous versions of the platform with the introduction of GraphQL support through Optimizely's Content Graph. Content Graph better facilitates the benefits of creating and managing content in one place and publishing it out to multiple channels or digital products than we've ever been able to.

It's also worth noting that this blend of traditional DXP and headless architecture, and Optimizely's CMS 12 capabilities in this area of Digital Experience Composition, are where, as Gartner's 2023 Magic Quadrant for Digital Experience platforms states it, digitally mature organisations are leaning towards. Again, another future proofing benefit of CMS 12.

This is all a significant step forward for organisations wanting to take the power of Optimizely's ability to orchestrate an experience through a coherent set of capabilities around data, personalisation, search and experimentation amongst others.

What's next?

So, in summary, there are many benefits in upgrading to CMS 12 from faster performance, to increased compliance and a massive opportunity for future proofing and optimisation. To get started, the first step is to understand the level of investment that is required to upgrade your solution to CMS 12 and what the opportunities are that this can bring through a program of optimisation. It may be that a proof of concept on the CMS 12 upgrade is the natural first step to understand the pure development effort before this is joined to the opportunity to understand the business case.

Talk to the experts

Having successfully implemented several CMS 12 upgrades and builds, we are very well placed to support you whatever stage you are at – from a building business case to support the investment through to implementation, roll out and support. Get in touch to explore if we can help.

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A person with glasses is sitting at a desk, using a laptop. The laptop screen displays a website with a video player and various colorful icons. The person's hands are on the keyboard and trackpad. The Netcel logo is overlaid in the center of the image.

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