

**isobar**

Adobe Summit  
2020 Recap  
Report



# Adobe Summit 2020 Recap Introduction

As the first quarter of 2020 has come to a close, businesses and brands all over the world are grappling with the question: What is the new normal?

Many enterprises have been rocked by the sudden and dramatic spread of COVID-19, resulting in changes in behaviour and disruption served at a rapid pace.

“What now?” and “What comes next?” were certainly questions that attendees of the 2020 Adobe Summit were asking when CEO Shantanu Narayen opened the event on March 31 through a reconfigured virtual format. Narayen and all of the speakers who followed acknowledged the reality of a world that has changed, and dared to look ahead to how businesses can create enduring relationships with customers after the pandemic subsides.

A clear and compelling truth emerged:

**Digital experiences are at the center of the new normal today and tomorrow.**

As Narayen noted, the entire customer journey has moved online as consumers adapt to lives to social distancing. This radical change in the customer journey has accelerated the rise of the digital economy. In fact, according to the newly created Adobe Digital Economy Index, as the pandemic took hold in March, the digital economy grew faster than the economy as a whole. Ecommerce grew 25 percent from March 13 – 15 compared to the baseline period of March 1 – 11, partly due to a dramatic surge in online grocery shopping.

## Introduction

### The Short-Term New Normal: The Right Experience for Now

The new normal means providing a customer experience that responds to very transactional needs – the kind of experience that fueled the growth of Amazon: Manage demand quickly, efficiently, and securely.

People in isolation need to be able to find everything from groceries to personal electronics easily, purchase them and have them either delivered to their homes or to a convenient brick-and-mortar location for pickup. They need access to documents that can be reviewed and signed easily online to facilitate financial services from home. They require all these capabilities and much more.

### Business Transformation and the New Normal

Only the businesses that transformed themselves to deliver the right products at the right time are benefitting from the rapid growth of the digital economy. Retailers such as Kroger, Target and Walmart had already either built or bought capabilities such as home delivery and buy online/pick-up in store that are serving them well now. They adapted their supply chains to be more nimble and responsive to the digital economy.

Businesses and brands that achieved transformations were proactive and continue to achieve success by:

- Seeing the value in analysing data to improve every aspect of their operations.
- Investing in AI and machine learning to do everything from developing online shopping carts to optimizing their supply chains.
- Embracing cloud technology to make shopping online easier.
- Adopting a test-and-learn mentality to rapidly and cost-effectively figure out better ways to service customers.
- By becoming adaptable businesses, these retailers positioned themselves for the unexpected: in this case, a widespread and sudden shift to a digital economy.

### The Long-Term New Normal: Being an Experience Business

The digital economy isn't turning back now. The short-term new normal is going to be the long-term new normal. Social distancing will likely become a permanent behaviour even when consumers start shopping offline again. As consumers recover from the pandemic, they will begin to hope, even expect, a more meaningful online experience – one that goes beyond order fulfillment and offers personalization.

Be an  
experience  
business built  
on digital.

## It's Time to Transform

Adapting to this new normal means transforming into an experience-led business. That's because as consumers adapt to a new long-term normal, they will elevate their expectations of the online experience. There's no doubt that consumers will continue to expect speed and efficiency from an online experience, but the elements that they have always craved in a great digital experience – such as personalization and content that connects emotionally – will matter more than ever as consumers adapt their behaviours for living online, not just shopping occasionally online.

The bar was raised a long time ago when leaders such as Amazon, Netflix, and Spotify showed other businesses how to build personalized, engaging experiences in an always-on environment. No one wants to step backwards.

As if to anticipate this shift, during the 2020 Summit, Adobe rolled out a new blueprint for businesses to transform themselves: the CXM playbook. It looks like this:

### Digital first:

Ensuring that digital leadership is core to the company's strategy and seen and a competitive weapon. The company is empowered to prioritize the customer.

### Data and insights:

Data is broadly accessible and provides insights that inform business decisions.

### Scalable content:

Content is available at scale, across any channel and based on personal needs and context.

### Optimized personalization:

Design and measure experiences that nurture customers

### Customer journey management:

A cohesive customer experience is delivered across channels, personalized and with optimized ROI through automation and AI.

### Pervasive commerce:

Embed shoppable experiences across every channel and touchpoint to drive digital revenue growth and to foster lifetime value.

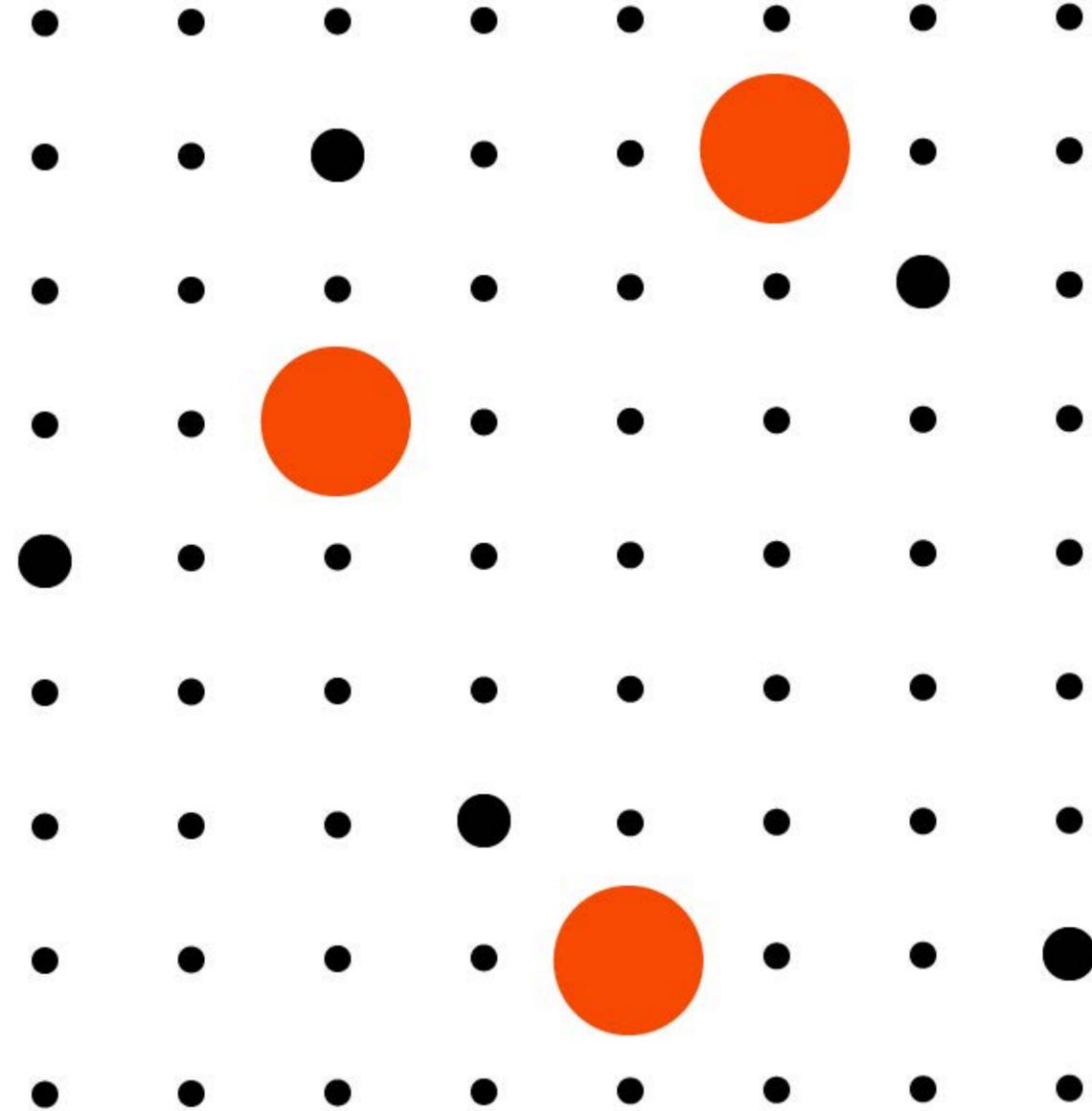
To realize the value of this blueprint, businesses need a cloud-based infrastructure, too.

Many industry leaders have already been transforming themselves into experience-led businesses. Throughout the past few years, the ability to create an experience-led business built on digital has separated leaders from followers for years. Under the new normal, that ability will define businesses that grow from businesses that fall by the wayside.

As we attended the summit and viewed the content through the lens of business transformation, we saw three key themes emerge:

1. Experience across the entire customer journey
2. Integrated Data Is a Must
3. Business Transformation Requires a Modern-Day Technology Infrastructure

Experience across  
the entire customer  
journey



## The Experience Extends Across the Entire Customer Journey

Transforming for the new normal means being experienced led across the entire customer journey in the digital world – beyond a business’s core site. [According to Google](#), the online customer journey spans anywhere from 20 to a staggering 500 touchpoints – and this data was reported before consumers made a massive shift to living online during the pandemic. Adobe acknowledged this reality throughout the Summit, especially in a discussion from Suresh Vittal, VP Platform & Products, Adobe Experience Cloud, [‘Connecting Experiences Across the Customer Journey’](#). Vittal showcased Adobe products helping brands build a data strategy to set them apart from the rest. As Vittal pointed out, offering personalized experience on one touchpoint is necessary but not sufficient to being experience-led. Brands need to provide experiences that are connected, contextual, and personalized across the entire journey.

Businesses and brands are being encouraged to build a holistic view of customers across big data ecosystems in real-time. More specifically, with Adobe Experience Platform brands are able to meet customers at the moment of discovery and give them the exact experience they are looking for (or expecting). Adobe uses Unified Profile segmentation and seamless activation of these audiences to focus more on content marketing.

In the session, [‘Supercharge Your Customer Journeys’](#), Adobe’s Jane Vu, Product Manager, Adobe Campaign and Greg Paul, Multi-Solutions Architect, highlight that in fact, people are becoming increasingly selective

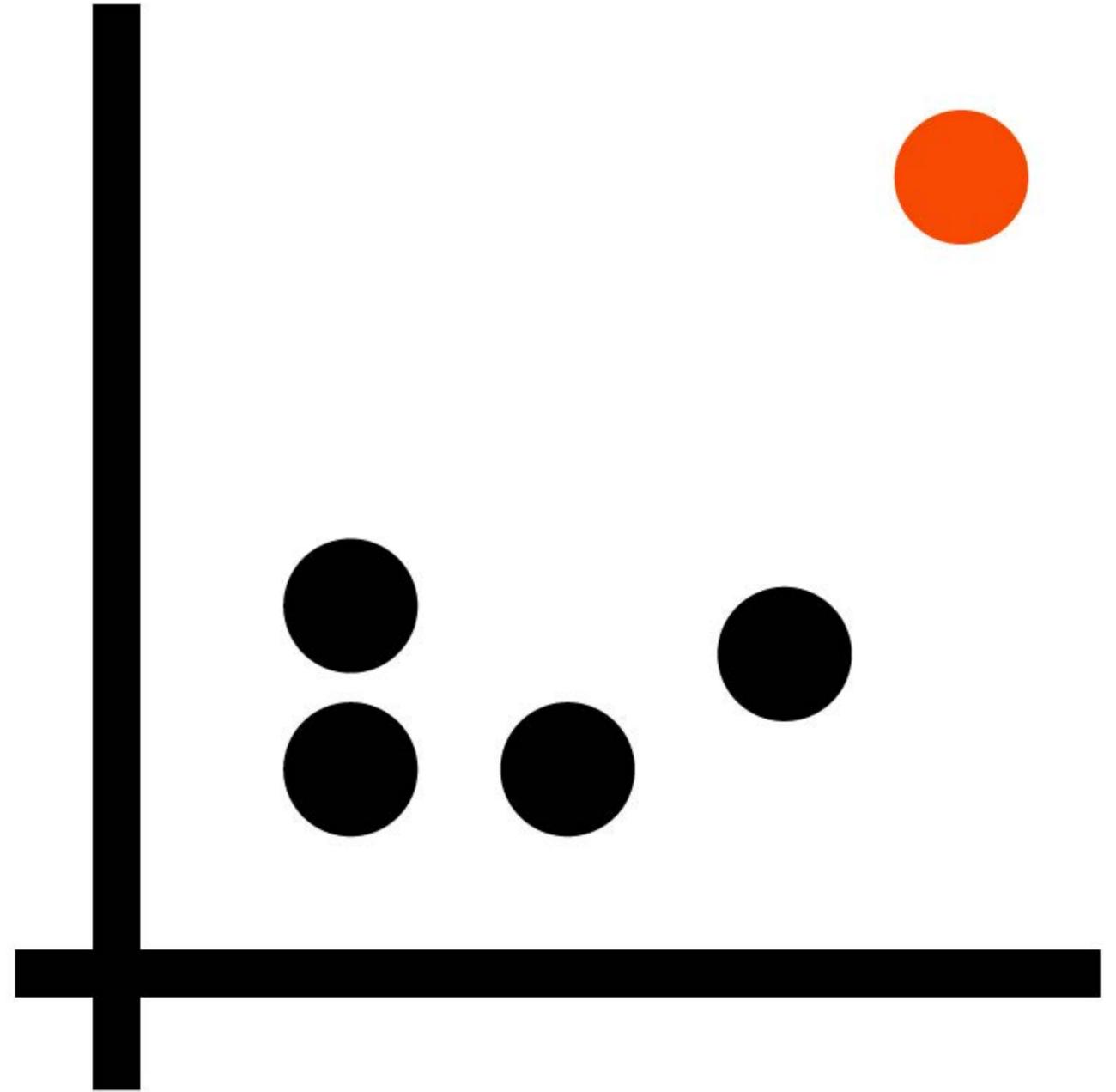
about their content consumption, customer journeys become increasingly fragmented and nuanced, and marketers that connect the dots are more likely to capitalize on micro-moments. Technology wise, Adobe is instrumental in allowing its customers to take real-time action on data to enhance the end-user experience. Audience Manager, the Adobe data management platform, assists in the activation of anonymous audience data, whilst the newly unveiled Customer Data Platform helps in the activation of known audiences data. Combining these capabilities with the data in Ad-cloud that helps determine effective ad buys and Adobe target uses data for personalization using Adobe Sensei, a holistic approach of the customer journey becomes clear for businesses and brands.

Behind the scenes, Adobe achieves this connected customer journey by using data driven object models and real-time customer profile. Adobe’s real time customer profile is a unified profile created by stitching together millions of data points and then running machine learning on it using Sensei. Adobe allows brands to use their products and build a data strategy that helps drive real-time optimised consumer experiences.

Finally, Adobe addressed the elephant in the room: how to [prepare for a world without cookies](#). In the session, Adobe ensured their ecosystem will continue to operate properly as the browser world becomes cookie-less. Initiatives by Adobe include robust 1st party structures, the use of authentication for identity, and moving towards a server-to-server data collection framework.



# Integrated Data Is a Must



# Integrated Data Is a Must

Businesses and brands need data that supports digital experiences in new ways across the entire journey. Adobe explained that this is possible by bringing data together from each corporate function that records these interactions, including marketing, finance, and customer service. This unified view is within reach of every business through a customer data platform. This was a theme that permeated the event, especially the session, [‘Marketing Trends That Will Impact Business Most in 2020 - and Beyond’](#) by John Copeland, VP of Marketing and Customer Insights, Adobe and Jason Heller, President, Persado.

In the session, they pointed out that there is real value in breaking down the silos that have kept data from being unified across the enterprise. Improving customer experience requires a holistic view of individual customers on their unique journeys. To do that, businesses need to bring together data from all corporate functions that record these interactions – from Marketing to Finance. This is a promise the industry has been making for at least a decade.

The good news is that the promise is being realized with the emergence of more robust customer data platforms. The bad news is that deploying a platform to unify customer data across journeys is probably not on the horizon for many businesses right now in today’s tough economic climate. With that said, the ability to integrate data across channels will become more valuable than ever as businesses look for ways to identify new customer segments.

Customer data platforms also help manage data privacy and compliance. These platforms are going to be essential to succeeding in the new normal, but a smaller set of businesses will be able to make meaningful investments into them in 2020. Those that do will have a distinct advantage.

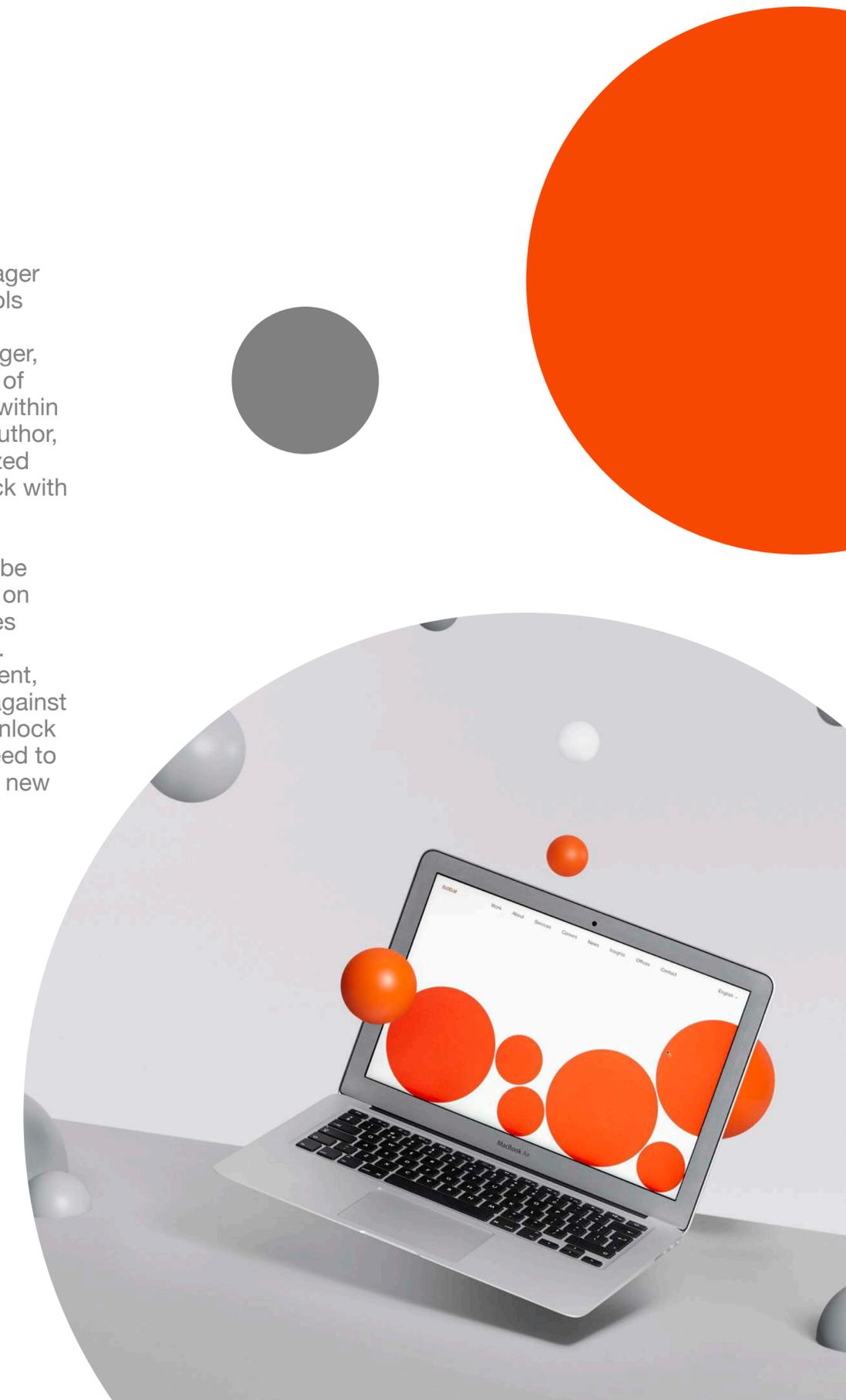
Another important element of managing data in the new normal is enabling real-time data availability, which enables a better experience in many ways, ranging from updated product recommendations based on in-session shopping to turning off retargeting immediately after a purchase. These, too, are outcomes of an effective customer data platform – but only for those businesses willing to invest in today’s climate.

Unified data further creates the conditions for a more closely aligned operating model to support an experience-led business. When different functions of a company share the same understanding of customers’ journeys and their impact on the business, they can rally around a better experience for the customer. Adobe, for instance, has adopted a data-driven operating model that brings together data from disparate corporate functions mapped against a common view of the business mapped against a customer journey framework.

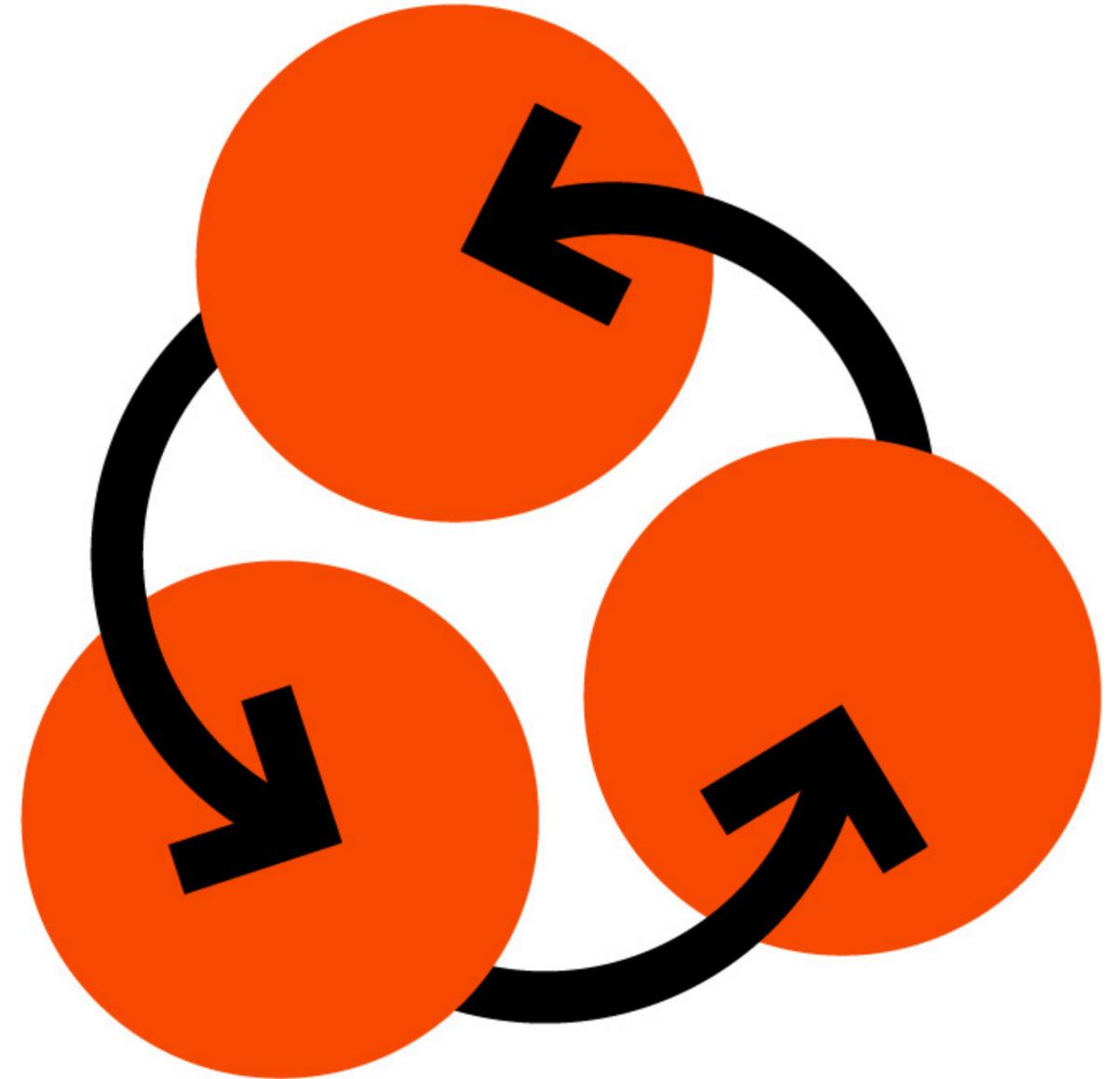
In the session, [‘Adobe Experience Manager Sites: Top Innovations’](#) by Adobe’s Haresh Kumar, Director of Strategy and Product Marketing and Cedric Huesler, Director Product Management for Digital Experience Management, there was a clear running theme

and heavy emphasis on Adobe Cloud Manager (CM). Adobe has aggregated their many tools across a number of platforms (AEM, Target, Magento, Sensei, Marketo, Audience Manager, and more) into one dashboard with the aim of allowing for easy integration of these tools within a project for ultimate control as a content author, and to empower authors to drive personalized engagement, maximize conversion and track with analytics.

Under the new normal, companies need to be prepared for some data challenges coming on fast. They include the phasing out of cookies and the challenges of identity management. As a company navigates identity management, businesses need to build a business case against key use cases that use integrated data to unlock value. This is something that businesses need to be doing now to lay the groundwork for the new normal.



Business transformation  
requires a modern-day  
technology infrastructure



## Business transformation requires a modern-day technology infrastructure

“You simply cannot deliver cutting-edge experiences with an antiquated infrastructure,” said Adobe CEO Shantanu Narayen in his opening keynote. Throughout the summit, Adobe highlighted elements of that infrastructure, such as a headless architecture that allows you to provide a more nimble digital experience by decoupling the front end of your content and commerce site from the back end.

From [Isobar and Magento’s joint Headless Commerce White Paper](#), we know how brands can leverage a Headless Commerce approach to create experiences across multiple touchpoints and future proof a brand’s e-commerce and omnichannel strategy. After tuning into the sessions from Adobe Summit, the report proves true in illuminating the many tools available to create a great Headless Commerce approach and the scenarios where the implementation of a Headless structure can bring short-to-long-term advantages to online retailers.

Headless Commerce is not only the “talk of the town”, but [according to Gartner](#), it is passing the “hype” peak cycle into real usage scenarios that enable new experiences and integrations. There are already real-life examples of clients such as Nestle’s Babynes who use an “Internet of Things” approach to connect an Internet-enabled device, tracking app and Magento store to get to know clients preferences and serve them in the best way possible. On top of that, more and more customers are using Magento’s PWA to provide app-like experiences on mobile devices.

From an architecture standpoint, Headless can be separated into three categories: traditional (also called monolithic) utilising the responsive Magento Luma frontend, decoupled using the PWA architecture, and a fully headless approach with a custom front-of-glass approach. In the session ‘[Going Headless with Magento Commerce](#)’ Adobe’s Nishant Kapoor, Senior Technical Product Manager, and Eric Erway, Senior Manager Product Management explained Adobe’s roadmap, featuring an array of separate microservices that are provided on GraphQL. This is not replacing any of the existing Magento features, but rather an optional add-on for clients looking to build custom services on the existing Magento framework. The roadmap focuses on adding the remaining APIs especially for B2B functionalities, and some of the remaining B2C functionalities. Once this is done, Magento will be fully enabled for a PWA/headless commerce approach. This will be a game changer for both B2C and B2B businesses, enabling PWA and headless experiences that used to take a lot of effort (which translated into larger costs) with a short time-to-market.

Businesses and brands need to build immersive experiences that differentiate their brands, and are unified across the entire customer journey. From the session ‘[Expanding Commerce Opportunities for Companies of All Sizes](#)’ Adobe’s Jason Woosley, VP, Commerce Product & Platform, provides the advice “Make every moment personal, and every experience shoppable.”



# Adaptability and boldness

Demonstrated by the messages shared across this year's Adobe Summit, 'Adaptability' and 'Boldness' are two attributes that are must-haves for any business that's going to make it to the other side of today's historic disruption and succeed in the new normal. Adaptability in this context means the willingness to invest in an experience-led business supported by unified data and a flexible technology platform – with businesses and brands taking the bold leap to invest as the world endures an economic hardship.

At Isobar, we know how to help businesses transform in a way that mitigates cost and risk. Transformation is our business. To learn more about how to thrive in a new normal, contact us. We are here to help.

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We are a global digital agency transforming businesses and brands through the creative use of digital. Our 6,500 digital experts in 85 locations across 45 markets in Americas, EMEA and APAC deliver experience-led transformation, powered by creativity through our end to end service offering.

As an Adobe Platinum Partner and Magento Global Elite Partner, Isobar are the leading customer experience and ecommerce specialists who deliver some of the largest Adobe websites and projects in the world.

We help companies with the planning, development, localisation, customer experiences and long-term support of multi-country projects and ecommerce deployments for clients including Nestle, Central Group, Midea, BenQ, and Decathlon, among others. We have 1,500 ecommerce specialists across the 45 markets we operate in.

#### **Adobe Summit**

Hosted by Adobe, Adobe Summit is a digital experience conference featuring the latest Adobe news, product innovations and breakout sessions covering digital trends.

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