

Making Change Easy: How to Tackle the Key Challenges of Digital Transformation in News Publishing



Digital transformation. A concept well known in the news publishing industry but easier said than accomplished. Digital transformation projects are multifaceted and take a multitude of elements into consideration: CMS, CRM, payment system, subscription, price changes, reader preferences and habits, and so much more. Addressing even one of these elements can be a massive undertaking in and of itself.

It's true: News publishers working in or transitioning to the digital realm face many challenges in the name of innovation and progress, and some still struggle to make a clean break from their print legacy and shift into a digital-first model. Therefore, it is crucial to make the right decisions when choosing the technology to support the optimisation of digital editorial workflows. Technology that stands out not only for its effectiveness, but also for its ease, even pleasantness, of use. In order to overcome the key challenges that news publishers face, they must find sustainable solutions that solve their problems for the long run in the shortest time possible.

We at Livingdocs have defined what we believe are the most pressing publisher pain points today based on our industry knowledge and direct conversations with our customers, and have presented our unique perspective on how digital news media houses can relieve the pressures created by digitalisation initiatives so that they may move forward unhindered in the digital age, maximise their technological potential and ultimately focus on their purpose: creating world-class journalistic content.



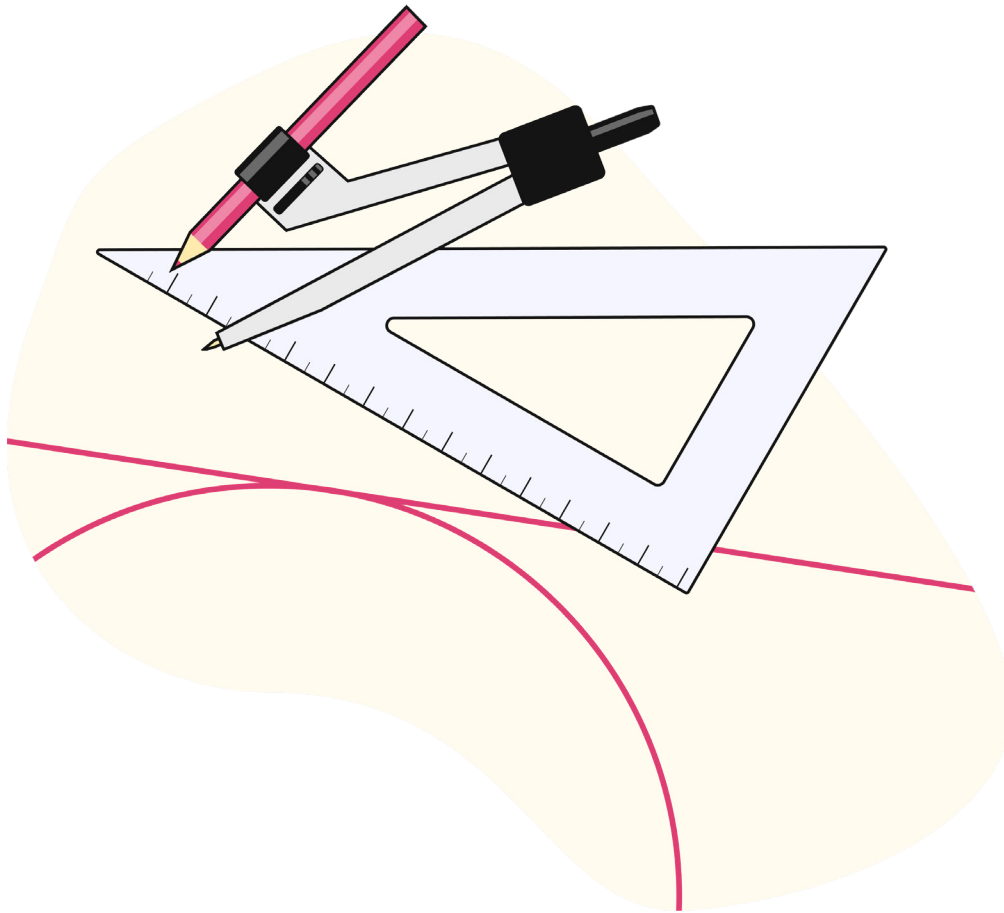
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CHALLENGE

Diversifying a digital product portfolio

SOLUTION

Define and refine



Everyone is talking about diversification of digital products. While this is a popular subject and diversification can, indeed, boost readership and potential revenue streams, there is another subject that we feel is more pressing: product definition. Without clearly defining your digital news product, diversification will not yield the intended results. It's putting the cart before the horse. So while the common conversation we hear is about digital product diversification, the root issue is digital product definition. For example, do publishers know with crystal clarity what the homepage is as a product? What is the value proposition beyond the internal one, in that certain authors get traffic?

One of the obstacles to product definition is the fact that many media companies struggle to move focus away from their print product. This leaves the whole organisation built around creating and producing a print product nightly, with the digital approach directed towards distribution of the content rather than clarifying what the digital product is in the first place, how it differentiates itself and presents added value.

The key here is to move the digital product focus from distribution to destination, to shift the purpose of the homepage from being a functional information depository to making it a desired destination for readers, somewhere subscribers want to return to, where editors consciously create content to fulfil the needs of their visitors rather than “blasting out” content that has already been produced. If readers are paying to be informed, at the very least they should enjoy a pleasant end-user experience and thoughtfully curated content in return.

First, publishers must define what their products are. A couple questions to ask when defining a page product:

“Who are the readers you’re trying to reach?”

“How can you make the product so good you ensure their loyalty and keep them coming back?”

In order to find the right fit, news publishers must be willing to try new things, to experiment and to experience some trial and error.

In order to support these experiments, the technology that facilitates digital publishing workflows must be robust and easy to use and navigate so that trying new things doesn’t leave operations at a standstill. So that changes can be made with ease.

Once the digital product is clearly defined, publishers can refine and iterate more easily, allowing for a more intentional diversification of the digital product portfolio, one that offers higher value than one done without the initial product definition clarification. Indeed, [page management](#) is an area where publishers can refine the definition of their page products.

The process of page management starts by clearly defining the homepage. Rather than making it a “free-for-all”, publishers can define an intention for this product and curate accordingly. The next step is to test what works and what doesn’t. Once this is clear, publishers can iterate on this for other topic pages. This approach applies not only to managing dynamic products like pages but also to finite products and digital editions, like the [Digitale Ausgabe](#) that Süddeutsche Zeitung is curating with the help of Livingdocs.

In order to successfully define and refine digital products, one must adapt both the perspective that inspires and the processes that produce content. Process change has to be implemented in order to produce defined products seamlessly, and this change as such needs to be adopted easily, swiftly and even enjoyably. Why? Because digital transformation can only happen successfully with willing participants.

At Livingdocs, we understand this root issue, and we offer our customers the support they need to improve their digital news offerings through better product definition and refinement. We offer functionalities that allow for the easy creation of clean pages and curated finite products, as well as streamlined page management so that publishers can add more value when they diversify their product portfolio.

2 **Going live with a new CMS without any interruption to production workflow**

CHALLENGE

SOLUTION

Look for proven smooth rollout success



When news publishers are met with the realisation that their existing CMS isn't cutting it anymore, they have to reassess. As the technology is constantly evolving, finding oneself working with a system that has become outdated is not uncommon. But if news publishers want to remain competitive in this highly dynamic world of digital journalism, their systems must be state-of-the-art and cannot slow them down.

Rolling out a new CMS is a massive undertaking and one that does not come without risk. If journalists find it hard to adapt or use the new systems, it can create mission-critical delays. Even worse, if the system is not well implemented and integrated, it can bring all production to a standstill. This is why it is essential to work with a CMS that is easy to learn, easy to use and easy to put in place, as well as robust enough to handle the transition.

Starting with the last point, implementing a new system for an entire news publishing organisation is rarely as straightforward as one might think. News publishing houses are often composed of several separate (yet connected) departments and editorial teams, which can lead to potential for complications during go-lives.

The incoming CMS must be stable enough to withstand implementation while being flexible enough to adapt to the specific needs of the news publisher introducing it. Of equal, if not greater, importance, the team behind the CMS must have proven success in rolling out their product in projects of varying complexity.

We at Livingdocs have extensive experience in working with parallel operations, i.e. phasing out the old while phasing in the new. This approach minimises risk, which is crucial when rolling out a new CMS at a major organisation overseeing several concurrent projects.

For example when Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger (KStA) decided to overhaul their entire tech stack and update their CMS over 8 different projects in less than a year, they knew that this could present a massive risk to their editorial workflows. What if something broke down along the way? What if their journalists found it hard to adapt to the new system?

It is primarily for these reasons that [KStA chose to work with Livingdocs](#): for our strong product and its ease of use. Not only was KStA able to meet their digital-first goal of launching all 8 projects by the defined deadline, but their team of 200 journalists was able to complete training with Livingdocs in a matter of just 3 hours. Livingdocs now supports ksta.de in publishing and distributing approximately 300 articles daily with more efficient communication, multiple channel alignment and consistency of asset distribution thanks to collaboration tools and a wide breadth of functionalities and features.

If speed is the ultimate goal, rolling out a CMS in record time is something that we are able to accomplish with the support of our [partners](#). For example, thanks to our collaboration with Appsfactory, customer [DER STANDARD saw a successful migration of 250 editors](#) onto Livingdocs in a mere 4 days, allowing them to seamlessly continue their work.

8 projects

300 web articles a day

200 journalists trained in 3 hours

250 editors migrated to Livingdocs in 4 days

Stream
now!

Want to learn more about going live with Livingdocs? **Watch the recording of our livestream Spotlight event** to hear about DER STANDARD and KStA's rollout experience first hand.

*Event held in German.

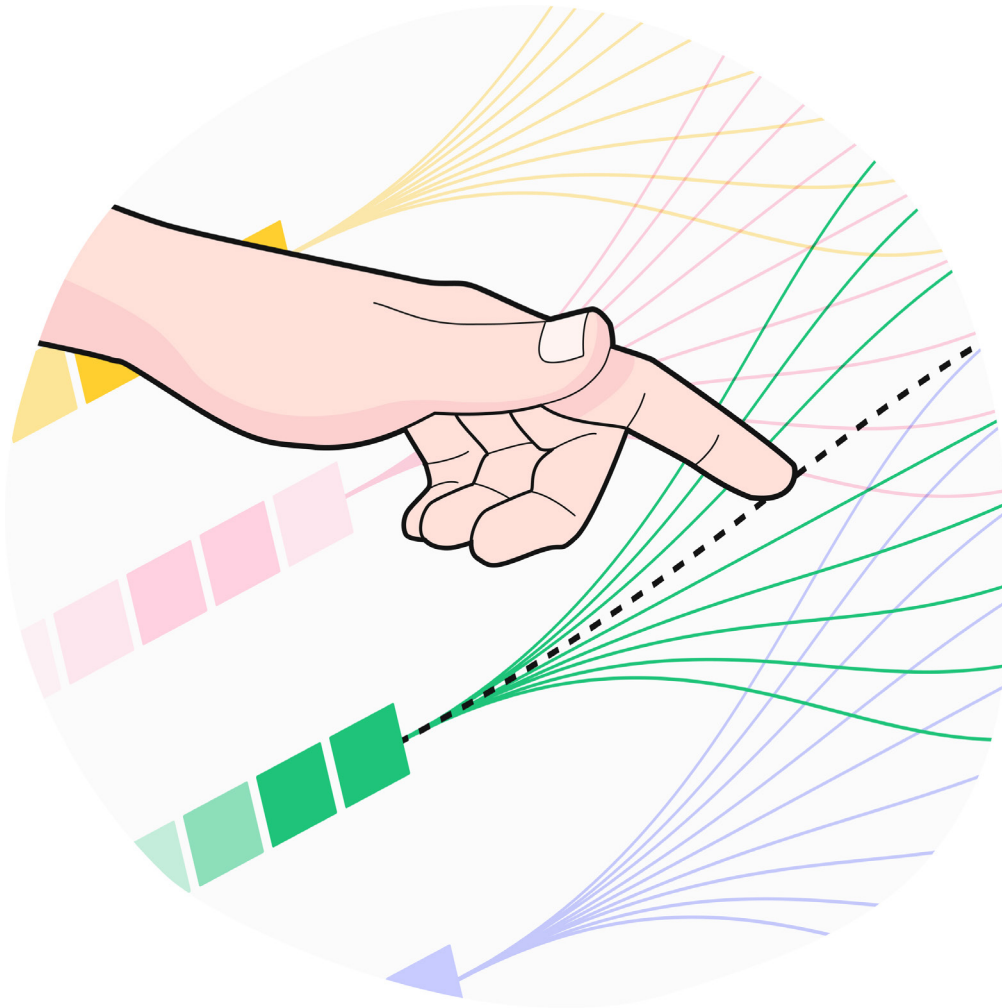
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CHALLENGE

Keeping up with the evolution of technology

SOLUTION

Think flexible and sustainable



Your new CMS is live. Now what?

Enormous efforts go into digital transformation initiatives. So when news publishers invest huge amounts of resources into digitalising their workflows and (hopefully) optimising them, the last thing they want is to end up with a technology that cannot adapt with the times, effectively rendering itself obsolete. To be sure, technology cannot remain static lest it risk presenting more of a hindrance than a help.

Therefore, it is critical that news publishers work with systems that are both robust and flexible enough to handle evolution without becoming so bulky that it slows them down, or having to wipe slates clean every time a change is needed. Over-customisation can lead to unnecessary density and more opportunities for problems to arise thanks to the greater number of moving parts. Rather than constantly adding things on top of a system, why not have a system that is consciously updated on a regular basis with new features and functionalities – as well as deprecations when a better solution to a problem is found – so the product can remain as streamlined as possible?

We update our product in bi-monthly releases in a sustainable approach that allows for ease of future change so that Livingdocs remains dynamic and responsive. **Conscious growth is a value that informs both our product development and company culture.** We want to deliver, and deliver sustainably so that our customers have a sustainable product.



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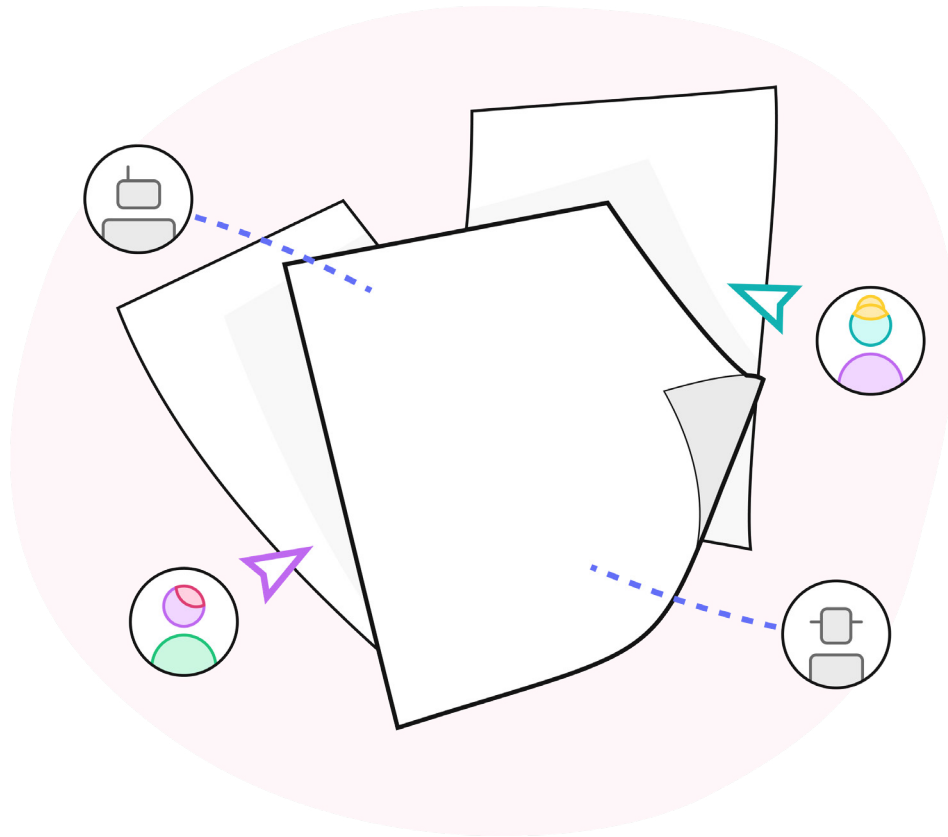
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CHALLENGE

Addressing advancing interaction between humans and machines

SOLUTION

Respond, don't react



On the other side of the coin, as technologies continue to be shaped and developed, some technology is evolving so rapidly that use cases genuinely demonstrating its value for users or content have not yet been determined.

There is currently a great deal of flux when it comes to the application of tools and processes in the digital news publishing industry due to the exponentially advancing nature of technology today. In this way, news publishers are best served by remaining keenly informed about the latest technological developments and responding to them pragmatically and objectively, letting their needs guide them in choosing the right tool to achieve their goals with a sustainable approach that allows for ease of future change.

Alongside our customers, we are constantly keeping tabs on the latest tech developments in the digital media industry. Before incorporating a new technology into our product, we do ample due diligence in order to assess true added value and ensure it is stable, workable and scalable; [our number one concern is to build a product that genuinely serves our customers.](#)

For example, it is no secret that AI, particularly generative AI, is the current hot topic in the news publishing world, a theme that has been present in many talks we've seen at [industry events this year](#). But for all its catalytic "sexiness", we feel the application of generative AI in the context of news publishing has some progress to make before it can be considered as a decisively advantageous tool.

That being said, we do understand that certain applications of AI have been put to the test successfully; through [our partner iMetrics](#), Livingdocs has found ways to incorporate one of their products with ours: their AI-powered auto-tagging solution for metadata. Nonetheless, we feel GenAI and its use on a broader scale is still in an experimental phase, one that is not yet yielding marked market value.

We are willing to experiment and explore these potentials so our customers' explorations are met with less resistance thanks to our being informed. Before we offer to implement something new with our customers, we make sure we have a full handle on it. This measured approach applies to AI, Large Language models and whatever other technology will be developed looking forward. Because while change can be disruptive, it shouldn't disrupt a publisher's production workflow.

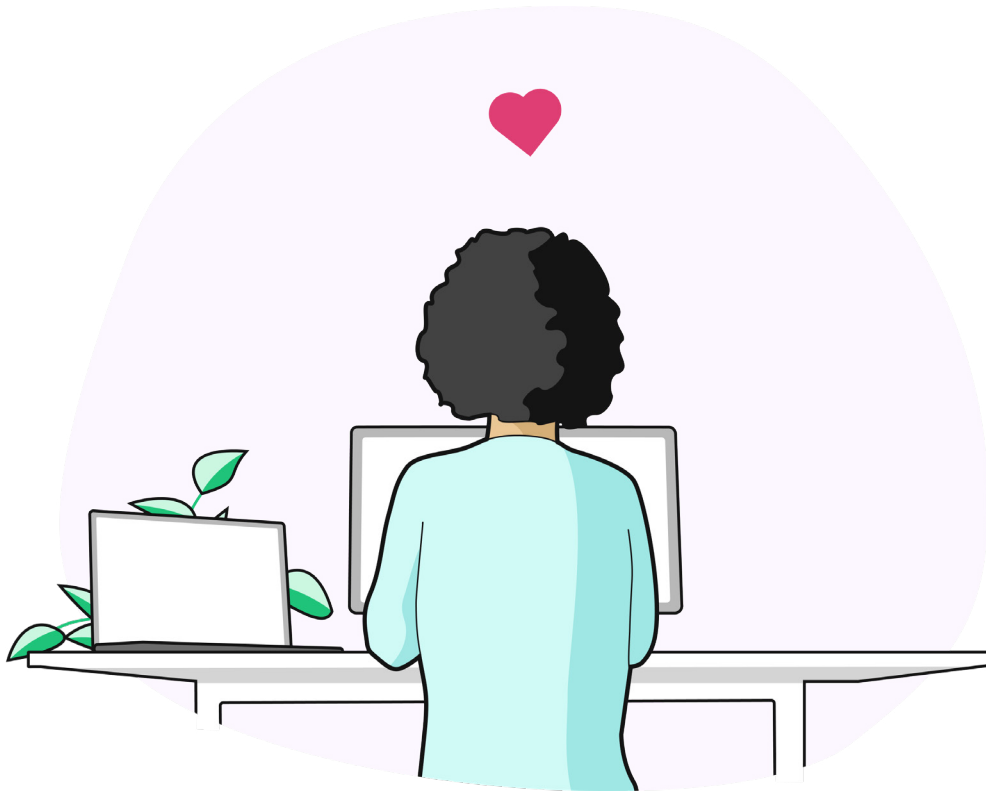
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CHALLENGE

Editors constantly encountering an unpleasant user experience

SOLUTION

Simplify and streamline



When news publishers incorporate new technology and connect several different systems in an effort to support their workflows, the resulting constellation sometimes doesn't operate as smoothly as intended. If the different systems are not well integrated, this results in a highly unpleasant user experience.

It should be mentioned that a poorly integrated set of technologies doesn't have an impact solely on the user experience; it can be extremely costly. When it comes to systems complexity, total cost of ownership is a salient issue. Products cost to be built, and cost more to be run, especially when making any changes is not easy; think of the opportunity costs incurred when critical changes are hard, if not impossible, to carry through. Until a system is turned off, it will incur costs. And when one has multiple systems running at once...

Having many moving parts adds complexity and increases the total cost of ownership significantly. Moreover, overcomplexity leads to too many dependencies, which in turn creates more risk and resistance in newsroom workflows.

An overly complex structure, disconnected systems that aren't easily integrated, overcomplicated UX, frustrated journalists – none of this bodes well for a newsroom's prospects of efficiently creating world-class journalism. Creating and publishing content should be easy and intuitive, not tedious and exasperating. Which comes back to the crux of the issue: **Does your technology truly make your editorial team's life easier?**

The key is to incorporate a product that is easily integrated and compatible with existing systems, and provides a streamlined user experience within itself and between different systems. After all, it is ideal if users do not have to jump between systems in order to complete a task, and can carry a workflow to completion without friction. We recommend a robust, stable product that is consistently pleasant and easy to use from the first moment of training onwards. A product that allows editors to focus on their content.

At Livingdocs, we prize the importance of an excellent user experience. Why? When editors can seamlessly create content, plan distribution, manage tasks and collaborate with their colleagues, they are able to focus on their content.

The intuitiveness of the Livingdocs user experience is one of the reasons we shine as a market leader in the GSA region. Our system is known for being easy, even enjoyable, to use, as mentioned above in the case of Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger, which saw 200 of its editors completing Livingdocs training in just a few hours.


We aim to bring journalists closer to the digital product they are creating. For instance, [we offer editors a 'WYSIWYG' experience](#), where what you see while editing the content is what you get as an end-product, for both desktop and mobile content. This means editors can focus their attention on the content itself, and ultimately create better journalism.

And when a product is so easy to use, allowing users to get closer to the product itself, this helps the entire digital transformation paradigm shift go more smoothly.

Speaking of the broader digital transformation aspect, we understand why news publishers often work with multiple systems to fulfil different functions, whether it's a planning tool or a system to manage your media assets. We aren't suggesting that you take a *tabula rasa* approach and erase the existing ecosystem when implementing a new product. We do believe, however, that the complexity of your systems structure should be simplified wherever possible.

At Livingdocs, we offer straightforward solutions directly in Livingdocs that are sometimes solved with separate systems (e.g. Media Library, Topic Planning and Task management). We are focused on constant complexity reduction in both processes and the tooling supporting them. Not only can we help you integrate the systems you want to keep in place, but we are also happy to help you explore how to simplify your processes and systems structure in order to determine what you really need and reduce your total cost of ownership.

For example, introducing Livingdocs does not mean having to wipe out your systems structure. Our integration capability is strong – integration of external tools like alephDAM or Desk-Net as well as various print tools is seamless – and we are committed to nurturing our trusted partner network that allows us to leverage the best the market has to offer.



For news publishers looking to adopt a digital-first approach, we at Livingdocs know that **change can be hard. But it doesn't have to be.** We strive to make it easy, not only from the technical side, but also from the human side. We are invested in supporting our customers sustainably in the long run. We offer solutions to solve specific problems as well as reassess the overall picture so that your news publishing workflows are smoother and increasingly efficient with time. We don't want to work with a publisher only to be replaced in a few years. We want to be the last CMS they will ever need. One that allows for clear product definition and value-adding diversification. One that can be rolled out rapidly and scaled without incident. One that is dynamic and developed intentionally in response to actual needs and proven technological potential. One that is integrated easily into an ecosystem. One that is a pleasure to work with.

While there is no one right static answer in this industry experiencing constant flux, we are ready and willing to help navigate the journey together with our customers with commitment, curiosity and creativity as new pathways present themselves, so we can give them the best Livingdocs and they can create content at their best.

About Livingdocs

[Livingdocs](#) is a modern digital content creation and publishing system used by some of the biggest news publishing brands and digital media companies. It offers a frictionless editing experience and powerful newsroom workflow support thanks to a robust yet streamlined CMS. News publishers love Livingdocs for its industry-specific features and intuitive technology. As a rising star in the news publishing field with a significant presence in the GSA region, Livingdocs works closely with its customers to build premium publishing solutions so they can focus on what they do best: creating world-class journalistic content.