

SPRING 2021

APPLY INSIGHTS

Strategy in a Digital-Fast World

By Apply Digital Strategy Team

applydigital.com



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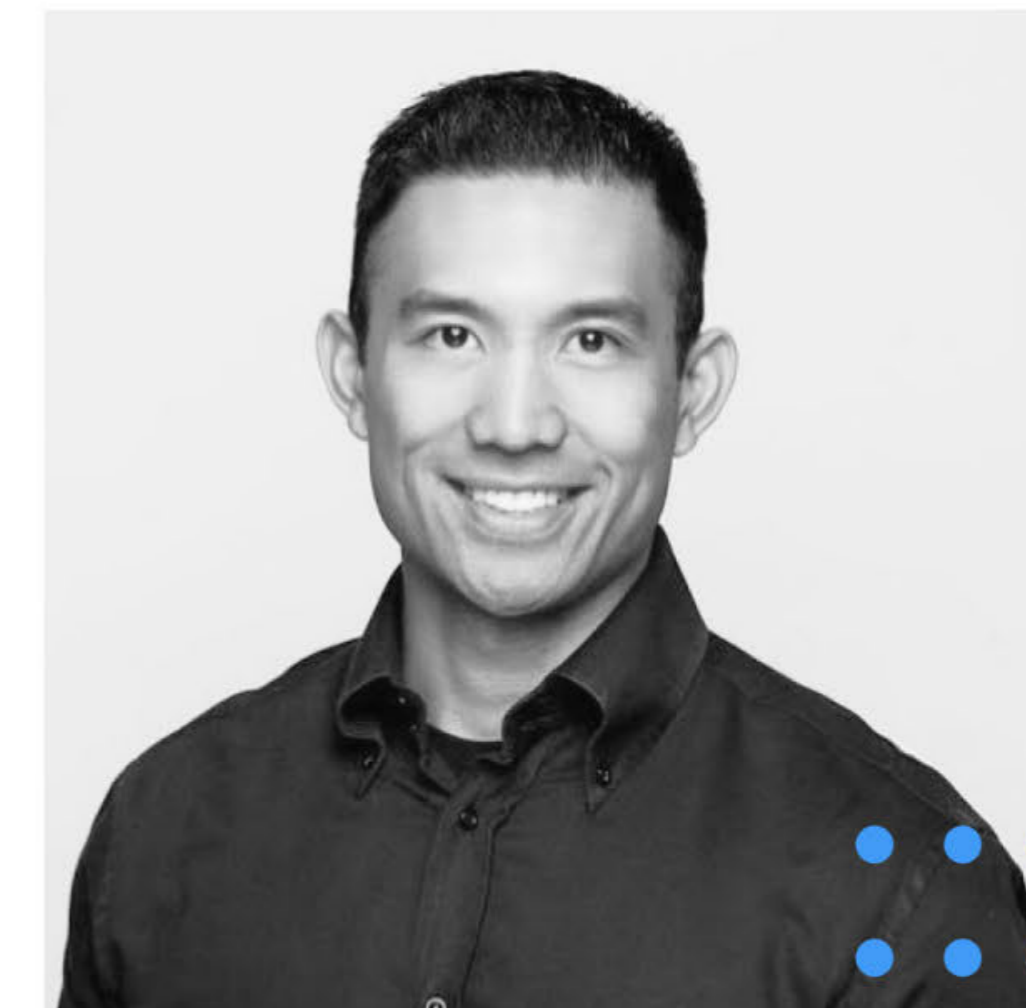
Foreword

Digital experiences, once thought of merely as a supplement to in-store and on-site, are now often the first and only opportunities for businesses to engage their customers. The digital-first world has brought with it the need for every business to adapt to rapidly changing customer expectations, with both speed and accuracy. Businesses of all sizes need to focus on digital evolution and transformation, or risk their very survival.

In the face of this rapid evolution, organizations are searching for help in building their digital capabilities. At Contentful, we recognize the role that agencies like Apply Digital play in helping organizations deliver more value while developing lasting relationships with customers. That's why we have built a strong partnership with Apply Digital. Our goal is to empower and enable organizations to evolve their strategies and meet the digital-first era head on.

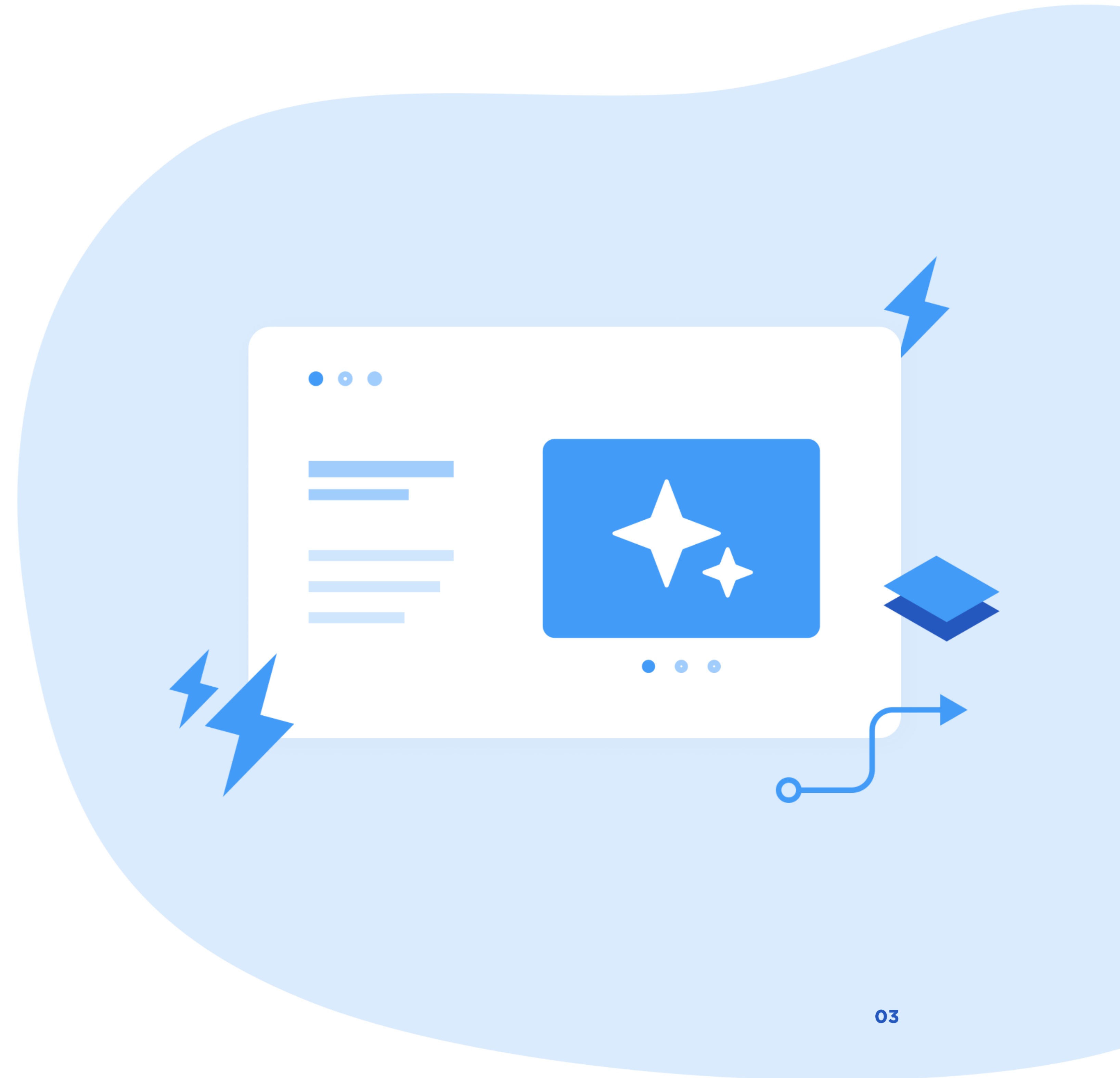
Dan Ganancial

HEAD OF PARTNER MARKETING — CONTENTFUL



Executive Summary

Businesses are being told they need to be digital-fast to keep pace with changing expectations, but speed leads to blurry vision if you don't have a clear destination. Digital-fast does not mean moving impulsively to align businesses to the latest technology overnight. We need to understand the complexity of the challenge to find simplicity in the solution. You can achieve this by first considering your customer, your organizational flows, and your industry, using these insights to find your core focus areas and inform decision-making. Then, by using key filters and “even over” statements, you can prioritize and make decisions more easily. Moving digital-fast requires thought. If you slow down and take the time to plan, you'll enable yourself to move quickly.





The Powers of Invention

The pace of the world is changing quickly, with businesses feeling the pressure to be digital-first and digital-fast as they try to keep up with the speed of technological advancement further exacerbated by a pandemic.

The U.S. Patent Office is evidence of the speed of invention — a combination of technological advancement and human creativity. In 1911, 121-years after its inception, it granted its 1-millionth patent — the vehicle tire. And just 24 years after that, it reached its 2-millionth patent. In 2018, the Office granted its momentous 10-millionth patent as it finds itself breaking a record *every single year*.

Fast-forward to 2020 where the Martech 5000 depicted a growth of 13.6% from 2019, displaying a total of 8,000 marketing technology platforms. There seems to be no threshold for innovative thinking.

And it doesn't end there. It's predicted that by 2023, there will be three times more networked devices on Earth than there are humans. This exponential growth of technological adoption is changing consumer expectations and, along with it, our businesses.

But, this isn't entirely new. If you ask CMS platform Contentful, technology has necessitated adaptation for centuries. The vehicle tire, too, was once a novel product — it changed consumer expectations and forced us all to adapt.

What *is* new is the speed at which things are changing. This is all proof that digital innovation is rapidly accelerating with no signs of slowing down.





Slowing Down to Move Fast

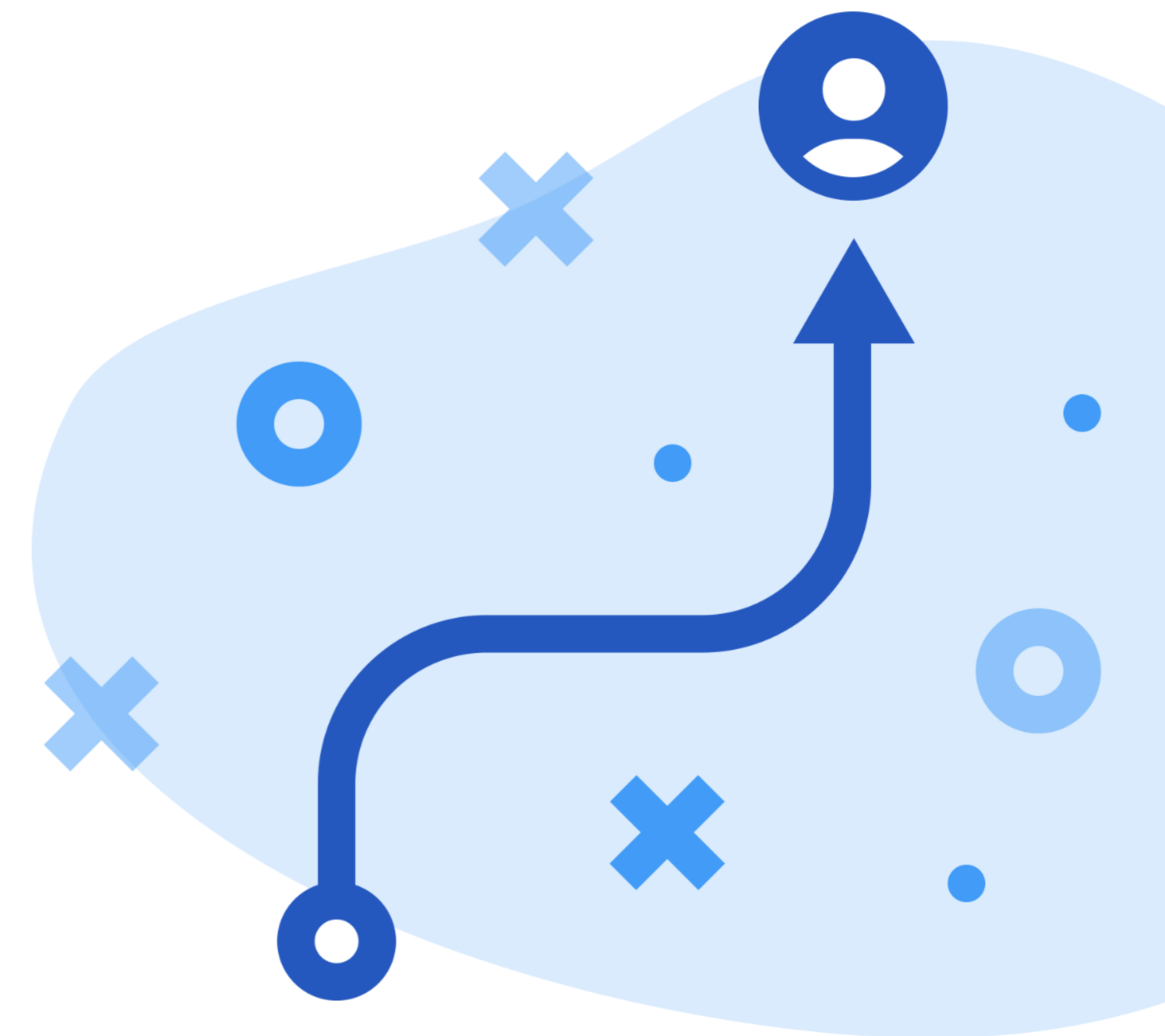
But digital-fast does not mean moving impulsively. It does not mean rushed ideas, poorly thought out plans and strategies, or rash decisions.

We cannot plan our businesses according to the speed of technological advancement. Trying means unavoidable potholes and, moving at that speed, a small bump will feel like a large crater. Moving too quickly puts businesses in the line of fire for organizational obstacles, skillset challenges, prioritization disagreements, and unexpected complications.

Succeeding in a digital-fast world requires slowing down, understanding the challenge, and planning around it. Then, and only then, can we execute with speed and precision.

After all, what the post-pandemic life will look like is still yet to be uncovered. 2020 was digitally-abundant and as Contentful remarks, the rate of change that we've experienced in the past year is here to stay. Determining how to navigate this speed requires thought and strategy — it's never too early to plan for tomorrow.

Digital-fast is *part* of the solution, not *the* solution. To succeed in this changing world, we need to take a step back. We need to develop a strategy and a full understanding of the problem from not only a technical point of view but from a people and process point of view too.



Understand the System to Nimblely Navigate It

We can't do everything at once — but we also shouldn't limit our focus to only a few areas. These are multifaceted issues we're trying to solve and we need to understand and acknowledge the complexity of the system to find simplicity in the solution. We won't make progress in isolation.

Gathering a deep understanding of the complexity helps in identifying the core areas to focus on. Here are some key considerations to keep in mind:

The Customer

Think about your customer from two perspectives:

- What are they getting from you versus what do they truly need/want?
- What is the delta between these two areas and how can you bridge the gap?

Understanding your customer enables a better understanding of what you need to deliver.



The Organization

Every organization is unique and each of these flows plays an essential role in defining the problem you're trying to solve.



01. Human Flows

Your employees, your team members, your colleagues — they are all vital in understanding the problem your business is trying to solve. Identify the players, their roles and responsibilities, and their blockers. Spend time learning about the organizational and customer-facing obstacles they face. Figure out what your teams are actually doing versus what they're supposed to be doing.

And acknowledge that in this digital world, your organization can work from anywhere on the planet — especially if data, content, and information are stored in an easily accessible system that can be achieved with platforms such as Contentful.



02. Information Flows

How information flows among your teams is vital. Think about how information is disseminated within your organization, how information travels from one point to another, one person to another, one team to another. Is it efficient and effective or siloed and inaccessible? How do you overcome the hurdle of siloed data?



03. Technology Flow

The technology you use in your organization can enable and empower your employees to be cross-functional and collaborative rather than siloed and independent. With Contentful, you can implement a modular technology stack that will allow you to layer the best-fitting industry tools for your organization's needs as opposed to being confined to a suite's programs.



04. Financial Flows

This flow should help you understand where your funding is coming from, what is needed to get more of it as well as understanding who is involved and which business priorities you should try to align with.

It should also uncover features you may be double-paying for or that don't meet your needs. For instance, your tech suite's built-in analytics feature may not cut it for you, so you decide to purchase a separate analytics program and now find yourself essentially paying for the same feature twice. With Contentful's modular system, you won't have to exhaust your budget on a suite with features that may not function effectively for your team. You can instead invest in programs better designed for your specific purposes and goals — or even build custom solutions.

The Industry

Zoom in on your industry — examine what is happening now, the current trends, and where you fit in. Then zoom out. Understand where your industry is heading and what role you want to play in its future. Looking through a micro and macro lens will help you focus on specifics while not losing sight of the big picture.

After closely looking at your organizational flows and industry trends, you'll be able to identify the challenges you are most ready to solve. Leveraging flexible tools, like Contentful, can aid in helping information flow more freely, ensure budgets are used more efficiently, and the technology fits the changing needs of a business.



Breaking Down a Behemoth Task

While planning and strategy is a necessary task, it can sometimes feel like a drawn-out and tedious process.

But it doesn't have to be.

There are ways of organizing your system and strategy to help you address central challenges and discover areas of opportunity, making the process more efficient and effective. Identifying key filters will help you prioritize your effort and create an action plan.

If, for instance, you feel your website needs a refresh and your tech stack requires an update due to internal challenges and difficulties meeting customer needs, these are the types of filters you can use.

Filtering for Success

If you feel your website needs a refresh and your tech stack requires an update due to internal challenges and difficulties meeting customer needs, consider these types of filters.

Recency

Was the content recently completed and doesn't need a lot of updating?

- ▶ Are there any changes that need to be made?
- ▶ Do you have the most recent brand guidelines incorporated into this piece?
- ▶ Is the UI creative, engaging, and cohesive with your design?

Value

Is your content adding **Business Value?**
Does it...

- ▶ Meet KPIs, objectives, and goals?
- ▶ Differentiate us in any way?
- ▶ Create sustainable, defensible value for the business?

What about **Customer Value?**
What do your customers want versus what they get? Are you...

- ▶ Meeting customer expectations?
- ▶ Making the brand more relevant for their lives?
- ▶ Impacting a niche or global audience? Which is a priority?

Performance Optimization

Some aspects of your website will be a higher priority than others, so ask yourself...

- ▶ What sections are gathering the most traffic?
- ▶ Is the content search engine optimized?
- ▶ How do they perform?
- ▶ Is it slow to load?
- ▶ Will updating improve the overall performance?
- ▶ Are there plugins and complicated code that need sorting out? Should you switch to a CMS like Contentful that has no-code/low-code* tools?

*No-code/low-code tools allow users to build digital experiences with little formal coding knowledge.

Effort

How much effort will be required to update your content?

- ▶ How much time do you have?
- ▶ What can reasonably be completed?
- ▶ Can this section be updated in smaller pieces?

Using these key filters will surface core areas of focus so you can prioritize and break down challenges into digestible pieces.

Breaking Down a Behemoth Task

(cont.)

Align these key filters with your key considerations. By doing this, your core areas of focus will start to surface, allowing you to prioritize and break down challenges into manageable chunks of work.

If you're still finding it difficult to make prioritization decisions, weaving "even over" statements into your process can help make hard decisions easy. These statements should be both positive and viable options that are time-bound.

For instance, "prioritizing speed even over perfection" means delivering to the market as quickly as possible even if the content is less than ideal.

Once this work is done, you'll be able to work digitally-fast, implementing all the knowledge you've gained by pausing, planning and strategizing, and prioritizing what needs to get done.

Using a system like Contentful will enable you to build a cohesive content strategy and avoid siloed flows. The benefit of having the right stack in place — one with the flexibility to use the best industry tools for your specific needs — means you'll be able to move even quicker.

About Apply Digital

At **Apply Digital**, we are driven to create world-class digital experiences that benefit people's everyday lives. We specialize in helping businesses navigate complex systems, break down behemoth tasks, and find solutions catered to their unique challenges.

Visit applydigital.com to learn more and contact us at hello@applydigital.com to discover how we can help you move agilely and deliver the experiences your customers want and need.



About Contentful

Contentful, the leading content platform for digital-first business, helps 28% of the Fortune 500 and thousands of brands around the world create and manage digital experiences for their customers across any channel. It enables greater speed and scale than traditional CMS solutions.

Contentful unifies content in a single hub, structures it for use in any digital channel, and integrates seamlessly with hundreds of other tools through open APIs. Companies such as Chanel, Bang & Olufsen, Shiseido, Peloton, BP and many others rely on Contentful's platform. For more information, visit [contentful.com](https://www.contentful.com).

