



# The Costly Composability Myth: What's the True Total Price of Enterprise CMS?

## INTRODUCTION

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A Content Management System (CMS) is a crucial platform for enterprises aiming to deliver seamless, dynamic, and personalized experiences to their users.

But beneath these aspects, cost-efficiency remains a core topic amongst businesses. Especially for IT, tech and marketing leaders who need to balance promising MarTech investments with the reality of a bottom line.

As general knowledge of composable content and commerce systems has grown, so too has a certain belief: composable frameworks are powerful, but they're also prohibitively expensive.

Storyblok decided to put that rumor to the test. We surveyed 43 companies with 5000+ employees to see what they paid in terms of implementation, yearly maintenance, and training & support for their CMSs.



The results speak for themselves: **for enterprise organizations, composable content systems were more economically viable across all categories compared to traditional, monolithic systems.**

This report breaks down the data and delves into the details of CMS ownership to explore how and why composable frameworks offer such economic advantages.

We hope you find it useful.

# Executive Summary

	MONOLITHIC	COMPOSABLE
Implementation	\$ 128,787.50	\$ 73,406.52
Yearly Maintenance	\$39,637.50	\$19,734.78
Yearly Training & Support	\$ 29,855.00	\$ 16,633.04
<b>Total Cost Comparison</b>	<b>\$198,280</b>	<b>\$109,774.34</b>

## KEY COMPANY FACTS

43

companies

5,000+

employees each surveyed

20

monolithic

23

composable

In 43 companies with 5,000+ employees, those using composable systems spent an average of nearly \$88,500 less than businesses with monolithic systems on the total cost of CMS ownership.

This included all three major spend areas:

- ✓ **Implementation:** Licensing fees, initial customization & integration, and infrastructure setup
- ✓ **Yearly Maintenance:** Scaling, software updates, and custom expansion plans
- ✓ **Yearly Training & Support:** Onboarding & staff training, technical support, and ongoing education



### REMEMBER

For our survey, monolithic and composable were defined as the following:

**Monolithic:** A monolithic CMS (aka “traditional CMS”) is an all-in-one solution that directly connects the front and back ends. Examples include WordPress, Adobe Experience Manager, Webflow, HubSpot CMS, Drupal, Sitecore, Joomla, and Squarespace. It also includes in-house solutions.

**Composable:** A modular platform that decouples the front and back ends. This enables users to integrate separate components and services, creating a fully customized CMS tailored to their exact needs.

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PART 1:

# Implementation

	MONOLITHIC	COMPOSABLE
Average	\$ 128,787.50	\$ 73,406.52

In our study, composable CMSs consistently achieved a lower cost of implementation than monolithic systems. **On average, it was over \$55,000 lower.**

# Factors Influencing Implementation Costs



## LICENSING FEES

Monolithic CMSs are also known as “all-in-one” systems. They come with basic functionality that’s often bundled with a series of other features. License fees for monolithic CMS are usually more expensive than those of composable ones due to this approach. Monolithic systems might have higher fees due to perpetual licensing, on-premise hosting costs, and the whole suite one would need to buy regardless of how many of those features they use.

Composable CMSs are designed to enable best-of-breed selection. Users can build their exact tech stack, so they’re in full control of what feature they use. This means they also avoid having to pay for features they don’t need.



## CUSTOMIZATION & INTEGRATION

A lot of effort has to go into customizing a monolithic CMS. Because it’s an inflexible setup, users often have to navigate a complex, integrated codebase for even minor changes. This can increase development time and thus implementation costs. Moreover, proprietary monolithic systems often limit how customizations can be implemented. This may require users with specialized knowledge and require costly development resources.

Composable CMSs allow greater flexibility thanks to the fact that they decouple the front and back ends of a system. Users can configure prebuilt components or packaged business capabilities (PBCs) and integrate them into a system designed for such customization. Without the need to circumvent rigid architecture, users may be able to customize their CMSs more efficiently and at lower cost.



## INFRASTRUCTURE SETUP

Monolithic CMSs often require users to set up an on-premise or managed hosting infrastructure to host the entire platform. This process comes with upfront investments such as hardware costs, cloud provisioning, server configurations, and more. As they must support the entire platform, the price can be considerable.

Composable CMSs may incur fewer infrastructure costs because they usually run as SaaS-native solutions in the cloud. Front-end experiences can also be deployed on modern PaaS solutions such as Netlify and Vercel. This efficient approach can reduce operational costs, and the need for in-house IT management, making scaling more affordable.



PART 2:

# Yearly Maintenance Cost

	MONOLITHIC	COMPOSABLE
Average	\$39,637.50	\$19,734.78

Our research shows that composable systems are more cost-efficient for enterprise organizations **by an average of nearly \$20,000.**

# Factors Influencing Yearly Maintenance Costs



## SCALING

Scaling can be difficult with a monolithic system. Because all components are tightly integrated and share the same infrastructure resources, scaling one part of the system usually requires scaling the entire platform – even parts that don't need to grow. This leads to inefficient resource utilization and higher costs.

Composable systems are optimized for scaling. Each component can be scaled individually based on those specific needs, so organizations only pay for what they need. Additionally, these components are frequently hosted on cloud services, which are capable of adjusting resources location in real-time for efficient spending.



## SOFTWARE UPDATES

Similar to those found in implementation costs, monolithic CMSs come with periodic software updates. Bug fixes are often bundled with new features and businesses need to take care of those updates themselves (or pay someone to update). For larger software updates, heavy pricing jumps are usually expected.

Composable CMSs are usually SaaS solutions and come with automatic updates. This means the SaaS vendor is responsible for rolling out those updates, so businesses don't need to worry about anything. While there is the possibility of PBCs or integrated programs having such software update costs, the choice of these programs is within total control of the user and can be swapped out easily.



## CUSTOM EXPANSION

Just as with the customization and integration costs found in the implementation stage, customizing a monolithic CMS tends to be challenging and expensive. As new needs emerge, adapting to them is more costly and time-consuming for monolithic systems. Not only does this come with the price of customization, but it may also decrease revenue if it extends time to market.

The opposite is true for composable systems. With quicker, easier adaption of new technologies, the development time and requirements are lowered, and thus so is the cost of maintenance. Furthermore, composable systems offer the agility that can decrease time to market and increase revenue.





PART 3:

## Yearly Training & Support Cost

	MONOLITHIC	COMPOSABLE
Average	\$ 29,855.00	\$ 16,633.04

In our sample, composable costs for yearly training & support were on average lower than monolithic costs. This was a difference of over \$13,200.

# Factors Influencing Yearly Training & Support Costs



## ONBOARDING & STAFF TRAINING

Due to the fully integrated nature of a monolithic CMS, these systems often require comprehensive training sessions to understand all parts of the system. Everything is interlocked, so users often must be trained on elements they may not even interact with. Both prices for training courses and working hours spent on the system contribute to the final cost.

Composable systems allow training to be targeted only to the specific components that users interact with. For instance, users who only need to create content do not have to learn the database, sales programs, or technical back end. This allows for efficient use of both training budgets and hours.



## TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Support costs for monolithic systems are usually bundled into the contract. This is inflexible and can end up being overly expensive as it covers all parts of the platform. While this may be convenient for some users, others might find themselves overpaying depending on their needs.

Organizations with composable systems can choose support contracts for the components that need them. If someone in-house has suitable experience, this may allow users to skip paying for technical support in some areas. This enables the users to pick and choose where to spend their technical support budgets.



## ONGOING EDUCATION

For monolithic systems, ongoing education often requires attending vendor-specific courses and certification programs. As these can usually only be provided by the vendor, they can be costly and time-consuming with no affordable alternative. Nevertheless, they're often necessary for the users to remain proficient with all aspects of the system.

With composable CMSs, each element can operate independently. That means users only require ongoing education for the components they are consistently using. This can lead to fewer training hours and thus a lower cost.

# Conclusion

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Monolithic CMS platforms, while robust and comprehensive, often entail significant spending. Users contend with ongoing operational costs like licensing fees, infrastructure maintenance, and vendor lock-in – all while struggling with a limited ability to customize their systems.

Conversely, the modular architecture inherent to composable CMS allows enterprises to integrate best-of-breed services tailored to their specific needs. This flexibility not only enhances the ability to respond to market changes but also reduces the overhead associated with maintaining and upgrading a monolithic system.

Composable systems still require financial investment. But our data shows that it is far below what is required by a monolithic framework – specifically, **\$88,500 less on average**. Moreover, this investment allows for remarkable flexibility and power that the more expensive monolithic systems simply cannot replicate.

The rumor of composable systems always being more expensive than monolithic ones does not hold up to scrutiny. For enterprise companies willing to embrace change, composable systems represent a highly effective investment in the future of their content and their bottom line.

## ABOUT STORYBLOK

Storyblok is a next-generation content management system (CMS) that helps businesses across industries maximize value from their content faster by speeding up workflows across the content life cycle. Businesses choose Storyblok to improve digital performance, reduce costs, and deliver powerful customer experiences faster and more efficiently.

As a cloud-native CMS, Storyblok enables developers and marketers to build standout content experiences faster by working off their preferred technology, developing faster with our powerful APIs, and easily extending their CMS with any third-party solution. Storyblok's intuitive visual editing experience, robust content management solutions, and omnichannel publishing capabilities empower marketers and creatives to drive global, personalized marketing strategies across all channels.

See how Storyblok helped global brands like Tesla, Adidas, and Nissan turn their content operations into a competitive advantage. Storyblok is the only CMS recognized as Customers' Choice in Gartner's Peer Insights 2023 report. See why at [Storyblok.com](https://www.storyblok.com)



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