



Gatsby for Web Design Agencies: When Should You Consider Gatsby For A Client Project?

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PREFACE

If you've been involved with building complex web projects, you understand how hard it can be to choose the right platforms and technologies for the task.

You want to create an experience that will delight both marketers and developers. Lightning-fast and distinctive for users. Seamlessly handling complex content, or commerce. Optimized for lead conversion and SEO. And fostering developer productivity and happiness.

With the recent renaissance of web technologies, thousands of teams have turned to Gatsby to deliver this promise for them.

For those with the right needs, Gatsby is an incredibly powerful technology that will help your site stand out from the competition. This e-book will help you evaluate whether your clients are a good fit for Gatsby and modern web development, and provide you resources to bring them along with you on a magical journey.

ONE

When should you consider Gatsby for a client project?

Over the years since we started Gatsby, I've spoken to hundreds of agency owners and leaders and asked them how they chose the technology they used for clients' website projects. Over and over again, I've heard variations on the same answer: "fit" and "maturity".

Almost every one of them – and I'll take the liberty of shifting to the second person, of **you** – has your toe constantly dipped in the water to monitor emerging technologies.

You regularly hear about new frameworks, vendors, and libraries from their team, social media, podcasts, and blogs. Often, you try these out on internal projects, like your agency's own website.

And you feel comfortable with a technology, before seriously considering using it in a client project, you model how you'd answer a client's natural questions:

- Is it used in similar websites in my industry?
- Does it mesh well with the other technologies in my stack?
- Does it optimize for the kind of things I find important?

If you're confident in the answers they'd be able to give, then – only then – is the technology worth serious consideration and discussion with the client.

Only you have all the information to decide when you should use a new technology – but I wrote this e-book to help you answer these questions, so you can understand when you should be **considering** Gatsby.

Whatever your goal is – whether you’re looking for tools to enhance performance and conversions, for a more flexible and modular content stack, to tap into the power of modern web development, or another reason altogether – the goal of this book is to help you decide whether Gatsby could be a good match for the types of clients and projects you work with.

We explore compatibility by industry; by technology; by concern; by value alignment. In each case, we walk you through a few scenarios where Gatsby could be a good fit, as well as other scenarios where Gatsby may not be a good fit.

Let’s jump into it!

TWO

Industry and Organization Type

Typical web stacks vary wildly across industries. The diversity is driven by variance in what organizations need, what makes sense for them to invest, level of internal technical know-how, and approval processes.

While adoption of Gatsby spans a wide number of organization types, it is primarily concentrated in a few specific industries. I’ve included a quick overview below, and then we’ll dive into each of the industries, and highlight the value propositions Gatsby offers for companies in that industry.

Category	Gatsby commonly found in...
Industry	Highly digitized industries; software, SaaS, startups, e-commerce, B2C, finance, insurance, higher education, nonprofits, government, other technology, content & media, professional services

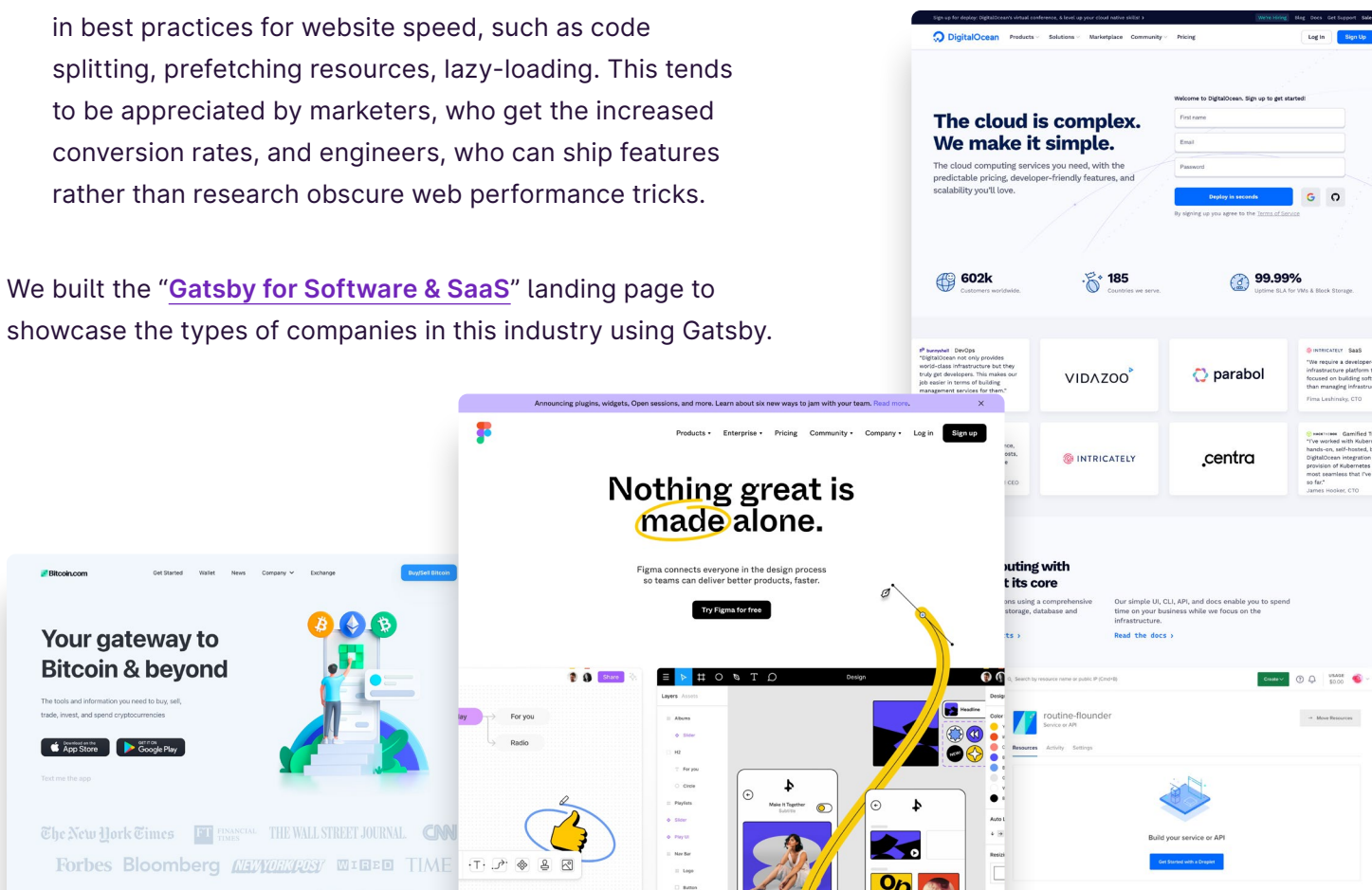
SOFTWARE, SAAS, AND TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES

Companies in this space tend to be at or near the cutting edge of technology and, correspondingly, look to create a web experience as fast and cutting-edge as their product.

There's a diversity of business models in this space: SaaS services, native desktop and mobile apps, developer tooling and infrastructure, hardware, cryptocurrency, and so on. Gatsby's gained adoption in this space because it appeals to values like:

- **Increased iteration speed.** High-tech teams are used to building “from scratch” but don't love the repetitive boilerplate that often entails. Gatsby comes with performance, security, and accessibility baked in, and build tooling pre-configured; these teams appreciate not having to reinvent the wheel.
- **Modern tooling.** Teams tend to be quite familiar with the latest web tech like React, modern JavaScript, and GraphQL, and appreciate that Gatsby allows them to use the technology they know and love.
- **Built-in speed.** Software businesses tend to think a lot about their demand generation funnels. Gatsby bakes in best practices for website speed, such as code splitting, prefetching resources, lazy-loading. This tends to be appreciated by marketers, who get the increased conversion rates, and engineers, who can ship features rather than research obscure web performance tricks.

We built the “[Gatsby for Software & SaaS](#)” landing page to showcase the types of companies in this industry using Gatsby.



E-COMMERCE AND LEAD GENERATION

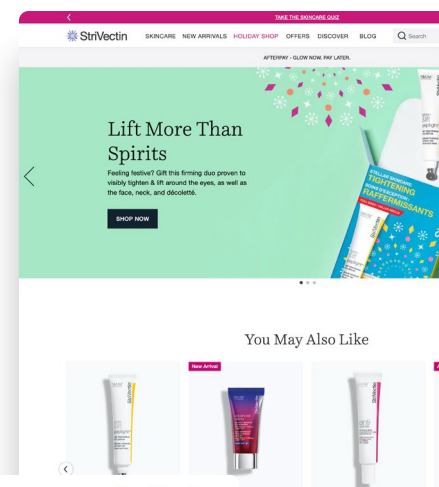
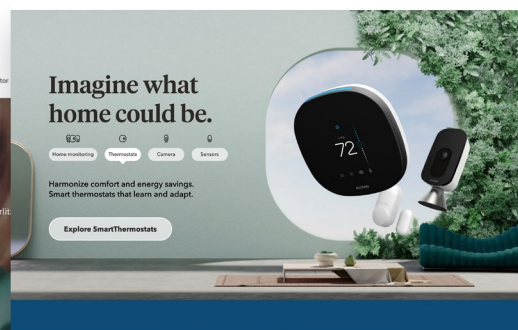
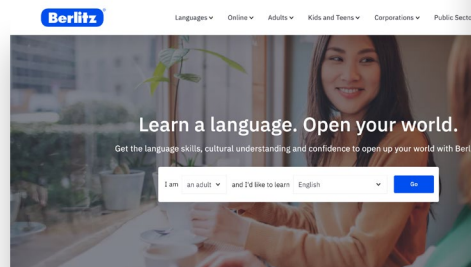
These organizations depend on their website to drive revenue and/or leads. They're willing to invest deeply in technology – if they can justify the ROI. Hundreds of e-commerce companies have found that Gatsby has.

Key value propositions for this type of customer include:

- **Better conversion rates.** As with software companies, demand-gen marketers – who tend to rule the roost in e-commerce companies – really like the better conversion rates. We've seen some pretty unbelievable metrics here – conversion lifts of 50 to 100% after switching to Gatsby. We actually wrote another e-book, just on this, if you're curious.
- **Better visitor engagement.** Companion to conversion is engagement. With higher site speeds we've seen bounce rates decline by 20 percent, 30 percent, or more.
- **Integrations, integrations, integrations.** With 2,500+ Gatsby plugins, it's easy to integrate any other tool you may need – e-commerce tools like reviews, loyalty, logistics; marketing tools like analytics and retargeting, and so on. We've seen Gatsby e-commerce users go multi-site and multi-channel. Gatsby really lets you do it all.

While Gatsby appeals to a number of types of companies generating leads and selling goods on the web, there's a specific kind of e-commerce site – luxury and lifestyle e-commerce brands – where it really flourishes. These brands tend to be fairly new, centered in categories like health & wellness, apparel, and household goods, find customers on Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok, and sell on Shopify. The ability they have with Gatsby to customize the look and feel of their site, while getting incredibly fast performance by default, makes Gatsby a compelling choice.

We built the [Gatsby for E-commerce](#) landing page to showcase the types of companies in this industry using Gatsby.



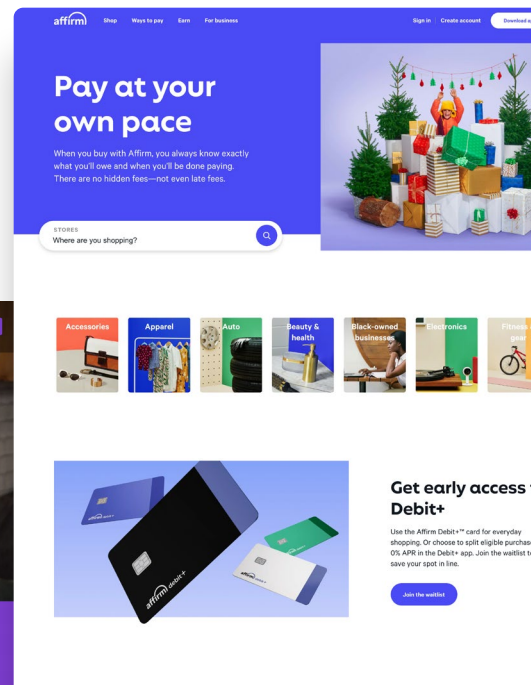
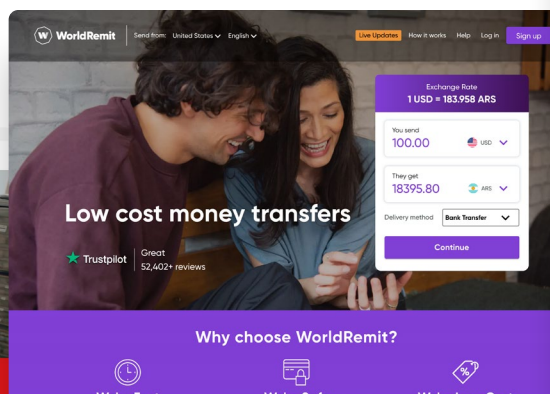
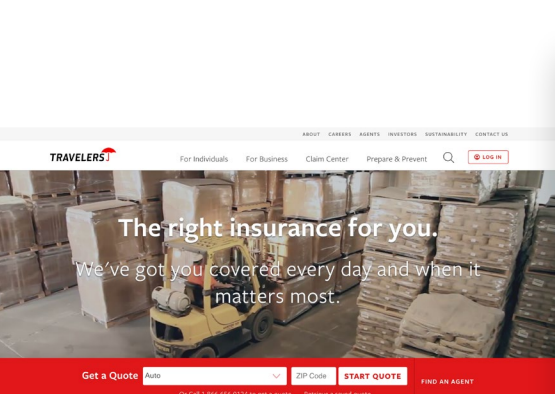
CONSUMER FINANCE AND INSURANCE

These organizations' mission is around helping consumers use their money wisely – whether that's helping make smarter financial decisions now or helping ensure financial security over the long term. Their web presence needs to present their offerings authoritatively, while conveying a sense of trust in their brand.

Key value propositions for this type of customer include:

- **High-quality websites.** Building trust is table stakes for consumer finance and insurance companies. Gatsby helps you build these kind of experiences: interactive forms and maps, sophisticated animations and data visualizations, instant text search, and so on.
- **Convey your brand right.** Some of these companies are online-first; many of them are online-only. Their online presence is one of the only ways they have to establish trust with their consumers. By giving access to the modern web, Gatsby lets them create the kinds of digital experiences that truly show the world who you are and what you do.
- **Secure by default.** Gatsby websites are inherently more secure because there is no surface vulnerable to attacks; with your content is compiled ahead of time, hackers can't get to the database or CMS. Even if your user data would still be safe – as a financial company, you really don't want to be talking to reporters, or customers, about a data breach.

We built the [Gatsby for Finance and Insurance](#) landing page to showcase the types of companies in this industry using Gatsby.



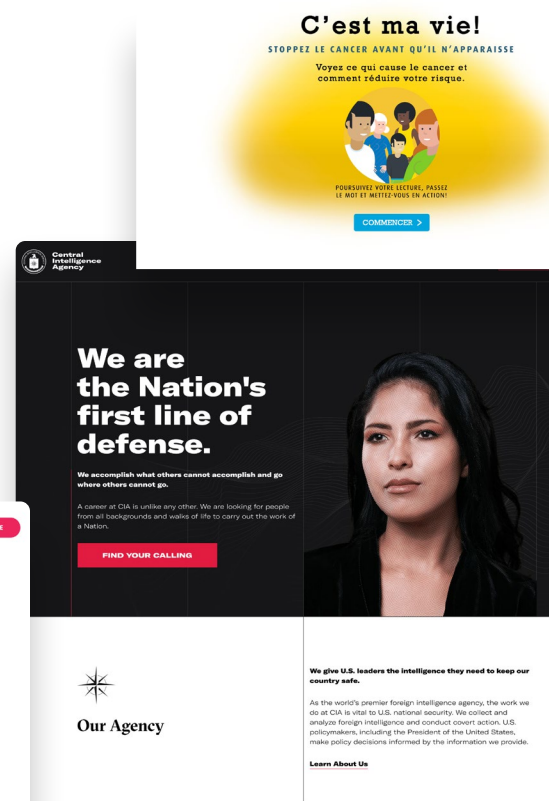
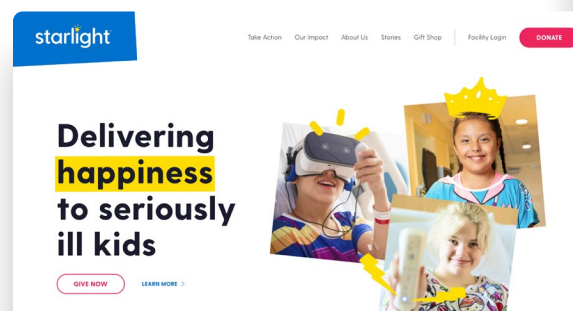
PUBLIC INTEREST ORGANIZATIONS: HIGHER ED, GOVERNMENT, AND NONPROFIT

Public interest organizations' websites have a dual mission. First, the web frontend needs to convey their seriousness and their mission, quickly building trust with users. Second, the overall system needs to enable decentralized content ownership and quick publishing by knowledge worker employees, and make the resulting volumes of structured information and content well-organized for users.

Key value propositions for this type of customer include:

- **Building alongside their existing stack.** Gatsby's architecture lets pioneers within an organization – or agencies they're working with – quickly create "microsites" alongside existing websites. In other words, they can move quickly without waiting for buy-in from the whole organization.
- **Keep the tools they love.** Their marketing team is used to writing and modelling content in a specific CMS where thousands of pieces of content live. Gatsby lets them keep their content where it is and continue using the same interface to edit it, while swapping out the frontend.
- **Here for the long run.** Public interest organizations tend to be concerned about longevity and stability of the tools they use. Thousands of organizations across a wide variety of industries use Gatsby. The open source project is supported by Gatsby, Inc, which has raised over \$45M and employs a team of over 20 full-time engineers to support open-source Gatsby.

We built the [Gatsby for Public Interest Organizations](#) landing page to showcase these types of companies using Gatsby.

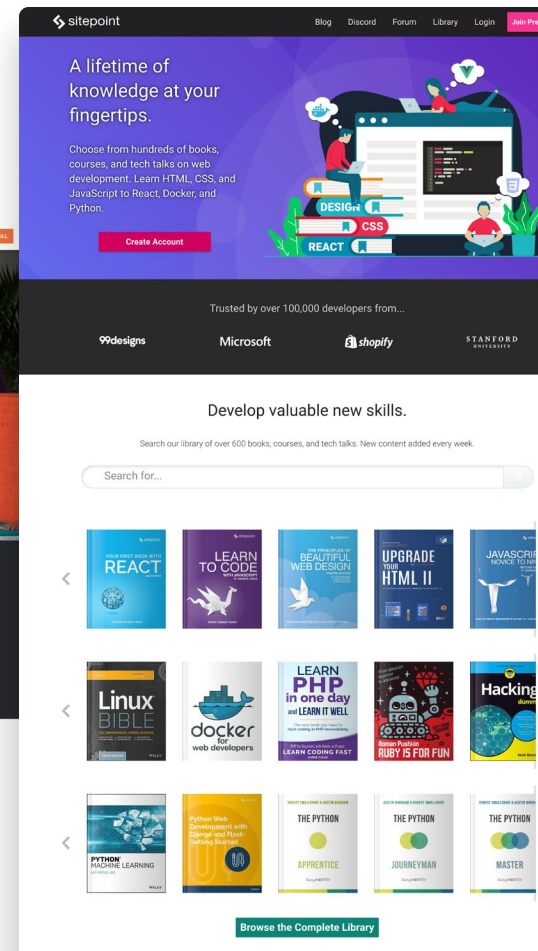
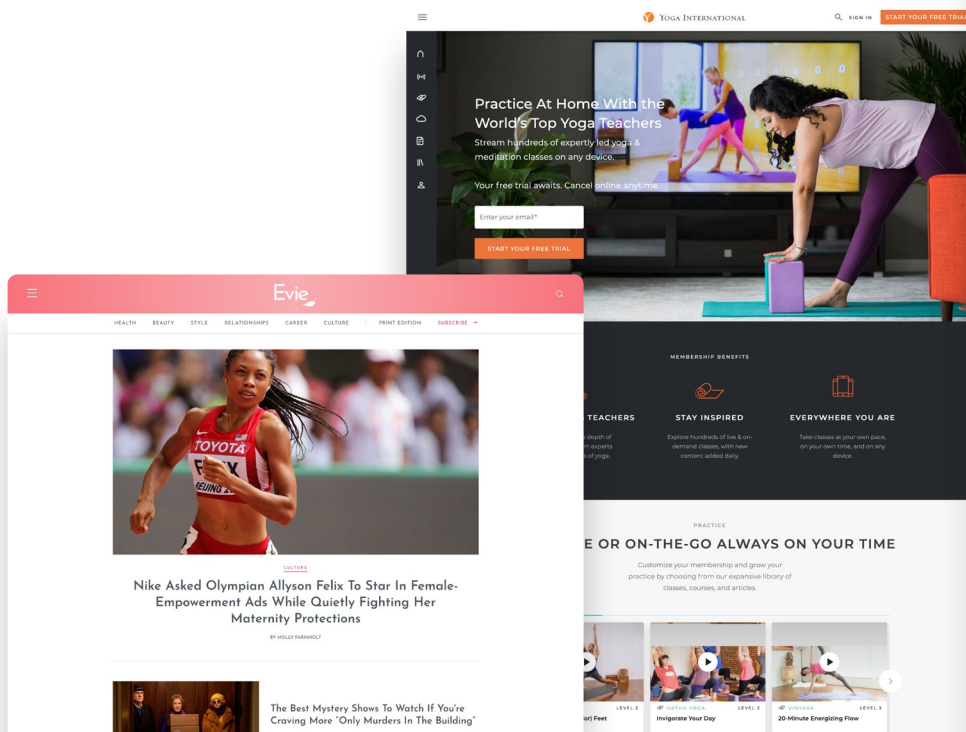


CONTENT AND MEDIA

Content & media organizations blend the needs of several previous categories. Like public interest organizations, they tend to be content-rich. Like e-commerce organizations, they tend to be focused on conversions, organic traffic, and SEO. In addition to the benefits mentioned earlier, there are a couple ones specific to e-commerce:

- **Great for image-heavy sites.** Gatsby progressively loads images, which are often a key factor in performance for content & media sites. It also means, no more downsizing PNGs and converting to JPG before uploading them into the CMS! Gatsby does image optimization without piling manual work onto the content team.
- **Scale without a hitch.** Content sites often suffer from bursty traffic patterns when they get a hit article. Gatsby's architecture — built on the edge, with no servers or databases to manage — scales to handle increased traffic. As long as your CDN is up, your site will never go down.

We built the [Gatsby for Content & Media Organizations](#) landing page to showcase these types of companies using Gatsby.



ANTI-PATTERN INDUSTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

While Gatsby is well-suited for the industries and organization types mentioned earlier, there are others it is less of a good fit for.

Some types of industries, like restaurants or SMB retail, tend to have fairly standard websites; these are probably a better fit for site builders like Wix, or Squarespace.

Different types of organizations may also simply want to place their marketing tech budget in other places than their website. For example, a B2B organization may choose to focus on customizing their marketing automation software and refining their lead scoring, rather than investing in a website refresh, or considering changing their website stack.

THREE

Technologies and trends

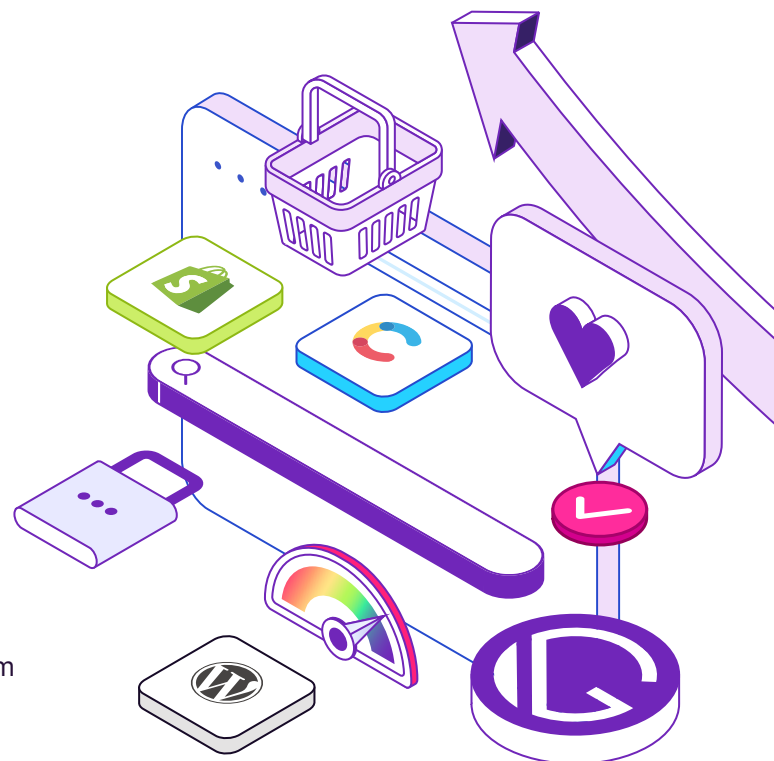
Gatsby sits at the intersection of a number of different trends shaking up modern web development.

Category	Gatsby is commonly associated with...
Technologies & Concepts	Modern digital stack – Contentful, Algolia, Auth0, Segment, Stripe; headless WordPress, decoupled Drupal, headless Shopify, democratized content ownership, modular architecture, best-of-breed
	Modern web development – React, site speed / performance, modern JavaScript, GitHub, JAMStack, Netlify
	Distinctive design and visual consistency – component libraries, design systems, Storybook, Tailwind

STITCHING TOGETHER THE MODERN DIGITAL STACK

For most of recent web history, website development has been closely tied to content platforms like Wordpress and Drupal.

But in the last couple of years, headless CMSs have given website development teams the freedom to build on their own stack. With this new flexibility to innovate, website teams are looking for technologies that will allow them to create rich experiences while iterating quickly.

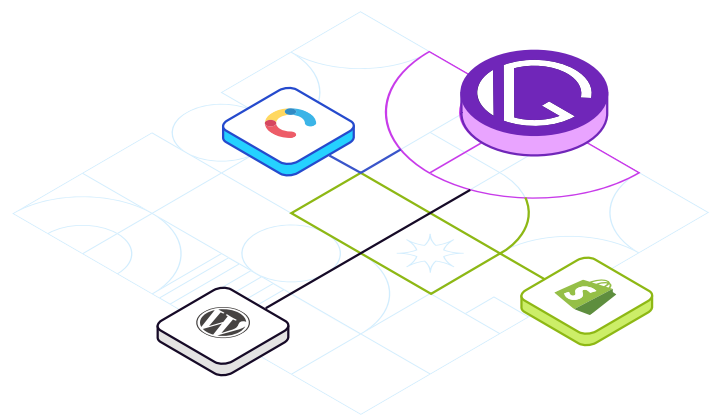


We wrote about this trend [way back in 2018](#) and called it the “content mesh”. What we said then:

“ Today, a website team running an e-commerce site can store product inventory in [Shopify](#), product listings in [Salsify](#) and reviews in [Bazaarvoice](#). A team running a paywalled content site can create stories in [WordPress](#), store video in [JWPlayer](#), user data in [Auth0](#), and subscription data in [Recurly](#). When website teams want to add search, they can turn to [Algolia](#); for payments, [Stripe](#); for analytics, [Segment](#); for A/B testing, [Optimizely](#); for personalization, [Evergage](#).

If your clients spend time thinking about any of these technologies in the content mesh – from headless WordPress, decoupled Drupal, headless Shopify, to the variety of services available for search, e-commerce, auth, payments, analytics – then they’re thinking in terms of best-of-breed systems and how to integrate them together.

In that case, you should be considering Gatsby.

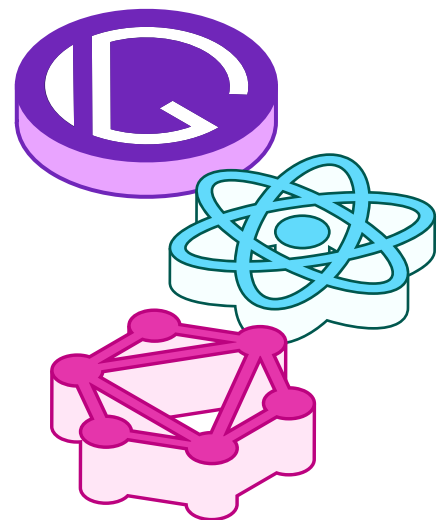


VENTURING INTO MODERN WEB DEVELOPMENT

Using the Gatsby toolchain provides access to the modern JavaScript ecosystem. More technically inclined clients may be enthusiastic, or at least curious about the modern JavaScript ecosystem and what it provides. If your client is trying to move their tech stack in the general direction of modern JavaScript, you should definitely be considering Gatsby.

Some of the technologies Gatsby utilizes and enables include:

- **React**, the most popular framework for developing web apps with powerful tooling that enables developers to build rich UIs quickly without shipping bugs.
- **The npm ecosystem**, the center of JavaScript code sharing with more than one million packages
- **A JAMStack architecture**; Gatsby goes above and beyond to provide unparalleled site performance.
- **Bundling tools webpack and babel**, which allow teams to use the most modern and straightforward JavaScript syntax.
- **Git-based version control**; teams typically use cloud Git hosts like Github, Gitlab, or Bitbucket to collaborate efficiently and effectively together



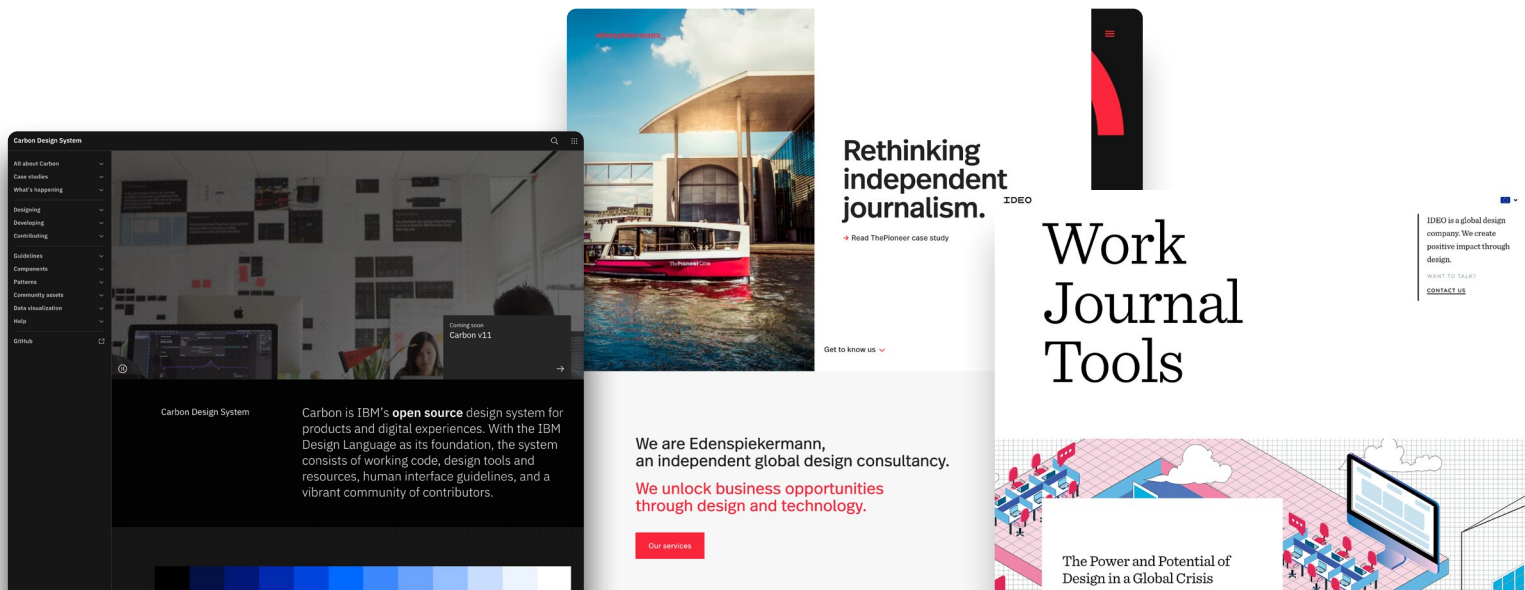
ACHIEVING DISTINCTIVE DESIGN AND ENFORCING VISUAL CONSISTENCY

Design is important for almost everyone. But some organizations have the bar higher than anyone else, distinguishing themselves with consistently excellent design. If you're working with this kind of an organization, you should definitely be considering Gatsby.

Great web design is hard, because it means getting a lot of little things right: typography, spacing, repetition, color, contrast, images, hierarchy, responsiveness, alignment, and so on. Great design means creating the right building blocks, assembled correctly. It requires creativity, not just the absence of flaws; and yet needs consistency in the patterns it establishes.

There's a swath of tooling that enables this type of consistency; from component-based design systems like Storybook to new styling systems like Tailwind. With Gatsby enmeshed in the modern JavaScript ecosystem, it's easy for teams to reach for these tools – and they frequently do.

We've seen teams at design-centric agencies like Ideo and Edenspiekermann turn to Gatsby; simultaneously, we've seen design teams at some of the world's largest corporations, like IBM's Carbon Design System, turn to Gatsby. From accordions to zoom buttons, Gatsby and React let you structure your site with reusable components.



ANTI-PATTERN TECHNOLOGIES AND TRENDS

If your clients are *happy* with:

- Site builder tools like Wix, Squarespace, or Webflow,
- Marketer-oriented enterprise CMSs like Adobe Experience Manager, especially the WYSIWYG features.
- Or theme ecosystems within WordPress that primarily need *configuration* rather than *code*.

Then Gatsby might not be a good fit for them.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR PROSPECTIVE CLIENT SITE'S KEY DIFFERENTIATING QUALITIES

It's easy to talk about feature functionality. **I want a website that can do X, Y, and Z?** And when the web was younger, that approach made a lot of sense. Today, we're able to take feature functionality more for granted, and the discussion moves to a real, but sometime nebulous topic: site **qualities**.

Site **qualities** are harder, but crucial, to talk about. Every website has a purpose. A Continental philosopher might call this a *raison d'être* (reason to exist). An American pragmatist would talk about "jobs to be done."

To understand the desired site qualities, ask the client about their hopes and dreams for their new site. Listen for the qualities they want it to have. You might hear some of the following:

- **Structured content:** The ability to manage and organize large amounts of highly structured content, or both.
- **Reusable content:** The ability to reuse content between multiple sites, mobile apps, etc.
- **Differentiated design** that conveys a message about an organization's brand and identity
- **Considered purchases:** Product pages and the overall site give the ability to "experience" a product without physically handling it
- **High-quality visitor analytics** including tracking, retargeting, and integration with acquisition channels.
- **Deep ecommerce integrations** and support for large numbers of SKUs
- **Optimized for lead conversion** with significant lift to current conversion rates
- **Optimized for SEO** with the ability to quickly create new pages and build new campaigns, and so on.
- **Usable by non-technical folks** – marketing teams can make the majority of changes they need without being blocked by development
- **Developer productivity** – an easy to extend codebase allows internal developer teams to quickly add new features and page types.
- **Maintainability** – the site can go in storage for six months, and be touched by a developer who's never seen it before, and they can make changes without bringing the site down by accident.

Most sites *absolutely* have to have three or four of these, and the rest are nice-to-haves, where the client is willing to trade them off against delivery time or budget.

FOUR

Getting started

We've painted the picture of the kind of client project that Gatsby is a good fit for. Of course, it also should be a good fit for your agency – but that's actually fairly straightforward to evaluate.

Organizational DNA. If you recognized your customer base in the portrait in the previous section, you've likely already developed a lot of the organizational muscles that you'll need to be successful building Gatsby projects. Specifically, you'll need the ability to build and deliver customized, high-quality websites to sophisticated clients using the best tools for the job.

Project readiness. What we've found is that the learning curve coming from ecosystems like WordPress, Drupal, and Shopify to Gatsby is primarily getting familiar with the tools of the JavaScript ecosystem. Topics like figuring out how to find a good virtualized table library, handling state with React, or installing dependencies using npm may be unfamiliar at first and easier (and faster!) over time.

That means that having developers who have used, or played around with the modern JavaScript ecosystem through tools like React, Vue, and Node.js, can be quite helpful. Most helpful of all, though, is developers who are excited to learn new technologies.

Pitching clients. One final, non-trivial part remains, of course: actually pitching the client. The form may be different – a casual conversation with a friend, or a formal presentation with slide deck to a group of executives – but the principles will be the same.

Whatever the client asks, they likely want to know the answers to these questions:

- Is it used in similar websites in my industry?
- Does it mesh well with the other technologies in my stack?
- Does it optimize for the kind of things I find important?

Hopefully, this ebook has given you the material you need to answer those questions confidently and definitively.

Gatsby empowers agencies to efficiently deliver highly performant and scalable client sites. That makes building Gatsby sites a great strategy to grow your agency as businesses migrate en masse to the Jamstack.

To best position yourself for this movement, join the Gatsby Partner Program so you have access to the most up-to-date training, sales, and marketing resources Gatsby has to offer: **sign up at gatsbyjs.com/partners today.**



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