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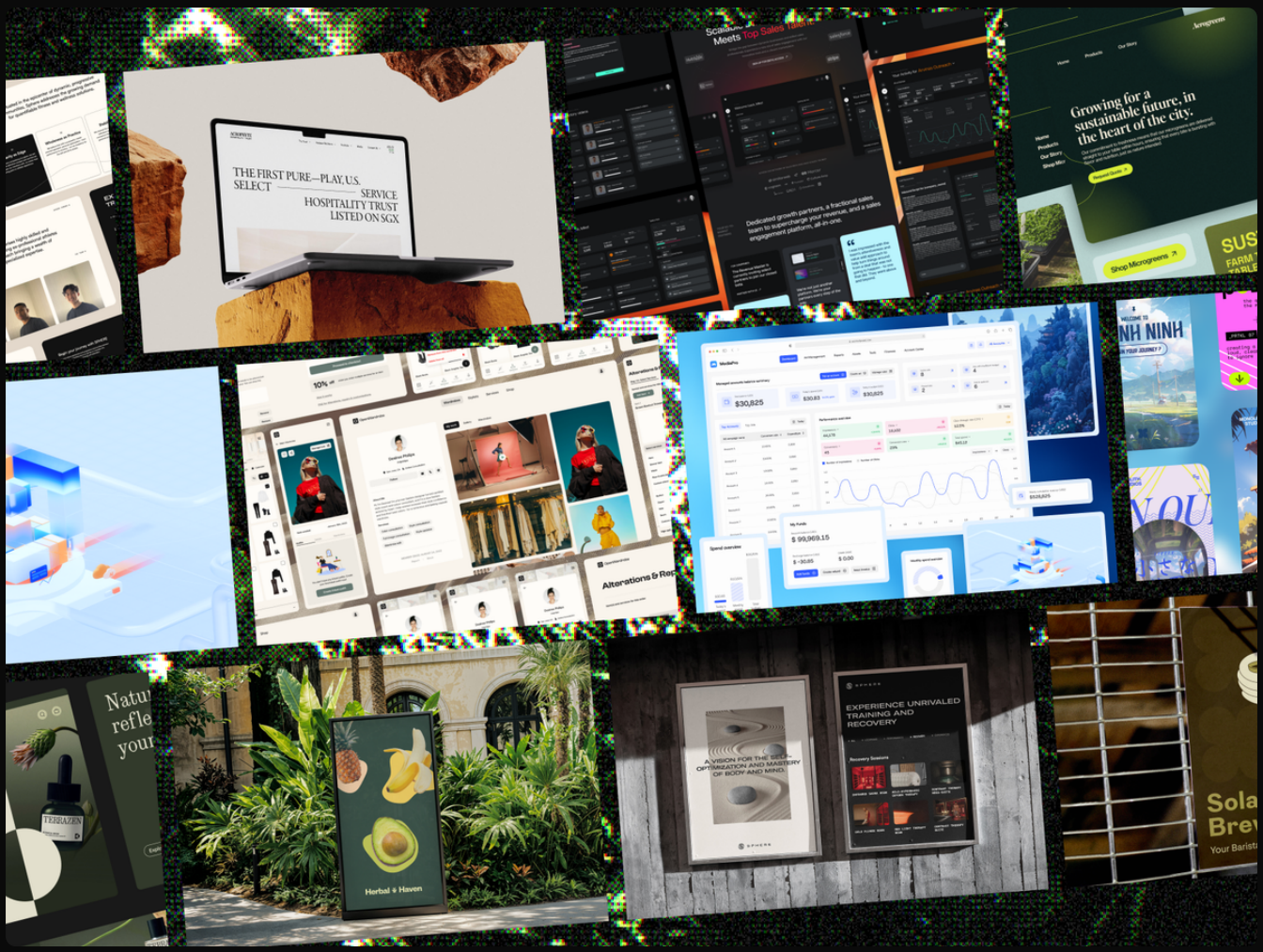
Why Next.js + Sanity Is the Best Alternative to WordPress, Wix, Webflow, and Framer

And what migrating to a modern stack actually does for your business



Every few years, a new platform promises to be the one that finally makes websites easy. WordPress did it in 2003. Wix in 2006. Webflow in 2013. Framer in 2022. And every time, the same pattern plays out: the platform works beautifully for the first version, then slowly becomes the bottleneck it was supposed to eliminate.

We see this constantly with the $100M+ ARR companies we work with. They built their site on WordPress five years ago. Or they moved to Webflow because a designer recommended it. Or they launched on Framer because the homepage looked incredible. And now they're stuck. Their marketing team can't publish content without a developer. Their site takes 4 seconds to load. AI search can't read half their pages. They're paying for premium hosting that still can't keep up, and the last "simple update" took three weeks because a plugin broke something.

The answer isn't another all-in-one platform. It's a fundamentally different architecture. **Next.js for the frontend and Sanity CMS for the content layer give established businesses what no monolithic platform can: speed, flexibility, AI visibility, and full control over their content as a business asset.**

What's actually wrong with WordPress, Wix, Webflow, and Framer?

Each of these platforms has real strengths. That's why they're popular. But each one also has structural limitations that become serious problems as your business scales. These aren't bugs that get patched in the next update. They're consequences of architectural decisions baked into how the platform works.

WordPress still runs roughly 60.9% of all CMS-powered websites as of mid-2025, down from 65.2% in 2022. W3Techs / ThemeWinter 2025 That decline isn't cosmetic. The WordPress ecosystem generated 7,966 new security vulnerabilities in 2024, a 34% increase from the previous year, with 43% exploitable without any authentication. WPScan / Patchstack 2024 Less than 30% of WordPress sites pass Google's Core Web Vitals thresholds on mobile. WP Engine 2025 Every page load requires server-side PHP processing and a database query, creating performance bottlenecks that expensive hosting and caching plugins can only partially mask.

Wix serves over 270 million registered users with 6.1 million paying subscribers. Wix 2025 It works well for small businesses that need a simple online presence. But its template system and closed architecture create hard limits on customization, and performance degrades noticeably as site complexity grows. You're locked into Wix's hosting, Wix's design constraints, and Wix's content structure. For an established company, that's a dependency with no exit strategy.

Webflow is the strongest of the visual builders, producing clean code and offering genuine design flexibility. But it hits a structural wall at scale: CMS collections are capped at 10,000 items on the Business plan. Webflow Documentation 2025 For companies with hundreds of pages, multilingual content, or complex content relationships, that ceiling arrives fast. The interface has also become increasingly cluttered as Webflow tries to do everything, from design to CMS to logic to e-commerce, inside one tool.

Framer makes stunning landing pages and has attracted roughly 171,000 live sites and around $50M in annual recurring revenue. BuiltWith / Broworks 2025 It's design-first in the best sense. But it lacks a mature CMS for complex content (no nested collections, no reference fields), has limited SEO controls compared to Webflow, and can't handle content-heavy sites. It's a prototyping tool that grew into a website builder, and the seams show when you push it beyond landing pages and portfolios.

What does the Next.js + Sanity architecture actually do differently?

The fundamental difference is separation. Traditional platforms bundle content, design, and hosting into one system. When you create a page in WordPress or Webflow, your content is stored inside that platform's format, displayed through that platform's templates, and served from that platform's infrastructure. Everything is coupled.

Next.js + Sanity decouples all three layers. Sanity handles content as structured data, stored in a cloud-native "Content Lake" that gives you typed fields, real-time collaboration, version history, and API access to every piece of content you create. Next.js handles the presentation layer, using React components and server-side rendering to build pages that are fast, accessible, and completely custom. Your hosting (typically Vercel) handles global distribution through edge CDNs.

This separation has specific business consequences. Your content isn't locked in a proprietary format. It exists as structured data that can be queried, filtered, and delivered to any frontend: your website, a mobile app, a digital signage system, an AI chatbot, an email template. When you need to redesign your website, you swap the frontend. The content stays exactly where it is. No migration, no data loss, no rebuilding from scratch.

For marketing teams, Sanity Studio provides a fully customizable editing environment. Your team can create and publish content with live preview, real-time collaboration, and custom workflows, all without touching code or filing tickets with engineering. Sanity Studio is built in React and can be embedded directly in your Next.js application, so editors work within the same context as the live site.

How much faster is a Next.js + Sanity site?

Dramatically faster, and the gap is structural, not just optimization.

Most WordPress sites load in 3 to 6 seconds without significant performance work. Build With Simon 2025 Even with premium hosting and aggressive caching, achieving consistent sub-2-second loads requires ongoing optimization effort that most marketing teams don't have time for. The reason is architectural: every WordPress page request requires PHP execution, a MySQL database query, and the loading of whichever plugins and theme components that page needs. Each layer adds latency.

Next.js eliminates this entire chain. Pages are pre-rendered at build time through Static Site Generation (SSG) or rendered on the server with Server-Side Rendering (SSR), then cached at the edge, meaning they're served from data centers physically close to each visitor. There's no PHP. No database query on every request. No plugin overhead. The result is sub-second page loads as the default, not the exception.

These numbers come from Forrester's Total Economic Impact study of Vercel (the hosting platform built for Next.js). Forrester TEI, January 2024 The composite organization, based on interviews with five real companies, saw **90% less time managing infrastructure, 80% faster builds and deployments, and 4x more major site enhancements shipped per year.** The three-year net present value was $9.53 million, with $7.7 million in incremental profits from higher web traffic and conversion rates directly attributed to improved performance.

Performance isn't vanity. Deloitte's research with Google found that a 0.1-second improvement in page load speed lifts retail conversion rates by 8.4% and average order value by 9.2%. Deloitte Digital / Google For a company doing $10M in annual revenue with even modest web-driven conversions, a 4-second improvement from legacy WordPress to sub-second Next.js represents hundreds of thousands in recovered revenue.

Why does this stack make your website visible to AI search?

AI crawlers, including OpenAI's GPTBot, Anthropic's ClaudeBot, and PerplexityBot, cannot execute JavaScript. Vercel and MERJ confirmed this across 569 million GPTBot fetches: zero JavaScript execution. Vercel / MERJ 2025 Any content loaded client-side is invisible to these systems.

Next.js solves this by default. Its server-side rendering and static generation deliver fully-formed HTML on every request. When GPTBot arrives at a Next.js page, it gets the complete content immediately, no JavaScript execution needed. This makes Next.js sites natively visible to every AI search platform while WordPress sites with page builders (Elementor, Divi, WPBakery) are partially or fully invisible depending on how much content relies on JavaScript rendering.

But AI visibility goes beyond rendering. AI search engines cite specific passages and data points, not entire pages. They need to understand what your content is about, who wrote it, when it was updated, and what questions it answers. This is where **Sanity's structured content model becomes a decisive advantage.**

In WordPress, content is stored as a single blob of formatted HTML. In Sanity, content is stored as typed, structured data: a title field, an author reference, a publication date, body

content broken into portable text blocks, related topics, FAQ sections, each defined with a specific schema. This structure makes it straightforward to generate comprehensive JSON-LD schema markup automatically from your CMS templates. Every page ships with Article, Person/Author, Organization, and FAQ schema without manual effort. Pages using 3 or more schema types show roughly 13% higher citation rates in AI answers. SALT.agency 2025

Sanity has also released native MCP (Model Context Protocol) server support, which means AI agents can directly interact with your content schemas. Sanity 2025 This positions structured Sanity content for the next wave of AI interaction: agentic commerce, where AI systems don't just search the web but actively browse, evaluate, and transact on behalf of users.

How does this change content publishing speed?

This is where the day-to-day impact hits hardest. On most legacy platforms, the content bottleneck isn't the writing. It's everything that happens between "content is ready" and "content is live." Developer tickets. Build queues. Plugin conflicts. Staging environment testing. Approval workflows that exist because a wrong click in WordPress can break the production site.

Forrester's TEI study of Storyblok (a headless CMS comparable to Sanity) found that organizations switching from monolithic CMS platforms experienced a **3x boost in productivity** and **582% ROI over three years**, with payback in under 6 months. Forrester / Storyblok TEI 2023 Contentstack's parallel Forrester TEI study showed **295% ROI with an 80% reduction in content-related development time**. Forrester / Contentstack TEI

Storyblok's annual State of CMS report surveyed companies that migrated to headless architecture. **99% reported improvements.** The most common gains: increased ROI (61% of respondents) and productivity improvements (58%). Storyblok State of CMS 2024 In the Netherlands specifically, 86% of headless CMS users reported ROI increases. In Germany, 70% experienced measurable performance and scaling improvements. Storyblok CMS Statistics 2025

With Sanity specifically, your marketing team works in a customized Studio interface where they can see live previews of their changes, collaborate in real-time with other

editors, and publish when ready, all without involving engineering. Content changes go live in seconds because there's no build queue, no plugin chain, and no database bottleneck. The frontend pulls content from Sanity's API, which serves from a global CDN with real-time sync.

What about security?

WordPress's security problem isn't a bug. It's a feature of its architecture. WordPress exposes a public-facing admin panel, executes PHP on every request, connects to a live database, and depends on a plugin ecosystem where 1,614 plugins were removed for security issues in 2024 alone. Patchstack 2024 96% of WordPress professionals reported experiencing security incidents that year. Melapress 2024

Webflow and Framer sidestep this by managing hosting and security internally. That's a real advantage, but it comes with the tradeoff of full platform dependency.

Next.js + Sanity eliminates the attack surface entirely through architecture. There's no publicly accessible admin panel. There's no plugin ecosystem introducing third-party vulnerabilities. There's no server-side PHP executing on every request. The frontend is a set of static or server-rendered pages served from an edge CDN. The CMS is a hosted, SOC 2-compliant service with its own security infrastructure. The two communicate through authenticated API calls. There's simply nothing for attackers to target in the way WordPress presents.

What results should you expect from migrating?

Based on Forrester's studies across multiple headless and composable platform vendors, plus migration case studies from agencies working at this scale, here's what the data shows.

Performance: Page load times drop from the 3-6 second WordPress range to sub-1 second. One case study documented a legacy site scoring 35/100 on Lighthouse before migration, hitting a perfect 100/100 after moving to a composable Next.js stack with sub-second loads. Build With Simon 2025 WP Engine's own research found that more

than 50% of headless framework sites achieve healthy Core Web Vitals scores, compared to less than 30% for traditional WordPress. WP Engine 2025

Developer efficiency: Forrester measured 90% less time managing infrastructure, 80% less time on builds and deployments, and 4x more major enhancements shipped per year. Forrester / Vercel TEI 2024 Developers stop fighting the platform and start building features that differentiate your business.

Content velocity: Marketing teams go from filing tickets and waiting days to publishing independently in minutes. The 3x productivity multiplier that Forrester measured is consistent across headless CMS vendors: Storyblok, Contentstack, and Sanity all produce similar outcomes because the architectural advantage is the same.

ROI: Vercel's Forrester TEI study showed 264% ROI with $9.53M net present value. Storyblok showed 582% ROI with payback in under 6 months. Contentstack showed 295% ROI. The variation depends on company size and complexity, but the direction is consistent: the investment pays for itself multiple times over. Forrester TEI studies 2023-2024

AI visibility: Your website shifts from partially invisible to fully readable by every AI search system. Given that AI-referred visitors convert at 4.4x the rate of traditional organic traffic, this visibility gap has a direct revenue impact that compounds as AI search adoption accelerates. Semrush 2025

The platform question is actually an infrastructure question

When a CEO asks "should we use WordPress or Webflow or Framer?", they're asking the wrong question. The real question is whether their digital infrastructure treats content as a strategic asset or a byproduct of their website.

All-in-one platforms treat content as pages. Your content exists inside that platform's format, on that platform's servers, displayed through that platform's templates. Move to a different platform and you start from scratch. Try to feed that content to a new channel, a mobile app, an AI chatbot, a partner integration, and you're building workarounds on top of a system that wasn't designed for it.

Next.js + Sanity treats content as data. Structured, typed, versioned, queryable, and accessible through APIs to any system that needs it. Your website is one consumer of that data. But it's not the only one, and as AI agents, voice interfaces, and multi-channel commerce continue to expand, the businesses that structured their content now will have a compounding advantage over those still trapped in page-builder formats.

The companies we work with aren't making a technology decision. They're making an infrastructure investment. The kind that pays 264% to 582% returns, eliminates an entire category of security risk, gives their marketing team back the independence they lost years ago, and positions them for an AI-mediated future that's already here.

Frequently asked questions

Why is Next.js + Sanity better than WordPress for business websites?

Next.js + Sanity outperforms WordPress in speed (sub-second loads vs. 3-6 second WordPress average), security (no exposed admin panel or plugin vulnerabilities vs. 7,966 new WordPress vulnerabilities in 2024), AI visibility (server-side rendering readable by all AI crawlers vs. JavaScript-dependent content), and content velocity (marketing teams publish independently without developer tickets). Forrester's TEI study found composable frontend architecture delivers 264% ROI over three years.

What are the limitations of Webflow and Framer compared to Next.js + Sanity?

Webflow limits CMS items to 10,000 on the Business plan, creating a hard scalability ceiling. Framer lacks a mature CMS for complex content: no nested collections, no reference fields, and limited SEO controls. Both restrict you to their proprietary hosting and design systems. Next.js + Sanity has no content limits, stores content as structured data queryable through APIs, and gives full control over frontend code, hosting, and infrastructure.

How much does it cost to migrate from WordPress to Next.js and Sanity?

Migration costs vary by site complexity, but ROI data supports the investment. Forrester's Vercel study found 264% ROI over three years with $9.53M net present value. Storyblok's Forrester study found 582% ROI with payback in under 6 months. Contentstack's study found 295% ROI with 80% reduction in content-related development time. Investment recovery typically happens within 3-6 months.

Is Next.js + Sanity good for SEO and AI search visibility?

Yes. Next.js delivers server-side rendered HTML by default, readable by both traditional crawlers and AI crawlers like GPTBot, ClaudeBot, and PerplexityBot. Sanity's structured content makes comprehensive schema markup easy to auto-generate from templates. Headless sites regularly achieve 90-100 Lighthouse scores vs. less than 30% of WordPress sites passing Core Web Vitals on mobile. Performance is a Google ranking factor and directly affects AI citation likelihood.

Can non-technical teams manage content in Sanity CMS?

Yes. Sanity Studio provides a customizable visual editing interface where marketing teams create, edit, and publish content independently without developer involvement. Real-time collaborative editing lets multiple team members work simultaneously with live previews. Content changes go live in seconds. Storyblok's survey found 99% of companies that migrated to headless CMS reported improvements, with 58% citing productivity gains.

What is structured content and why does it matter?

Structured content means storing information as typed, queryable data fields rather than formatted page markup. Instead of a "page" with HTML, you have defined content types (articles, team members, services, FAQs) with specific fields, relationships, and metadata. This matters because structured content can be reused across any channel, survives any redesign, is natively parseable by AI systems, and enables automatic schema markup generation that improves both SEO and AI visibility.