CASE STUDY: BRIGHTSPOT AND LEADING RESEARCH FIRM

How Brightspot Transformed Content Management in the Research Industry

High Maturity, Reliability, Customer Responsiveness, and Best-of-Breed Features Win the Day

Dion Hinchcliffe
Vice President and Principal Analyst

ALPS

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AT A GLANCE

This case study demonstrates how a leading defense intelligence and analysis firm used Brightspot's content management solution to significantly overhaul its mature, sophisticated research publishing business.

AT A GLANCE	
Problems	· Complex legacy content structure · Sophisticated publishing processes · Need to work on many touchpoints
Solutions	· A modern content management solution · Robust support for legacy content and integrated systems · An adaptive and responsive implementation process
Benefits	· Faster operation (content loads 12x as fast) · Reliability (zero downtime to date) · Operational adaptability and future-proof system

Business Themes

Future of Work	Marketing Transformation	Next-Generation Customer Experience	Technology Optimization

THE COMPANY

The subject of this case study is a well-known global agency that provides open source defense intelligence and prefers not to be named. The agency's customers rely on the timely, verified, validated, unbiased, and relevant defense, threat, and equipment intelligence delivered via various digital content models. The interconnectivity of its open source intelligence and analysis data enables the agency to rapidly provide the market with the unique insights required to make mission-critical decisions quickly and effectively.

The firm has a special reputation in the industry, and its highly regarded "stamp of trust" has great value when it supplies customers with timely, validated, unbiased, and relevant intelligence in a fast-changing world that often has rather unreliable information.

Facing a variety of challenges, the agency needed a more modern content management system (CMS) that would make it easier and faster to produce the complex flows of content it is famous for while effectively tapping into vast libraries of existing digital assets and information resources to make the most use of them. The task of a systematic upgrade of the agency's linchpin CMS fell on the internal content and architecture team, which had to deeply understand what the company needed for at least the next half decade and then determine the best path forward.

First, this team needed a proven and mature solution able to handle complex tabulated content and integrate with the growing number of IT systems that support the agency's business. The organization also preferred to use a single solution provider rather than intermediaries, consultants, or external developers. In addition, it wanted a single point of contact, if possible, for development, testing, and deployment to make sure the new system worked seamlessly from end to end. Finally, and perhaps foremost, the agency needed a CMS that was highly scalable and readily adaptable to whatever the rapidly changing market threw its way.

Brightspot Customer Case Study Subject

- **Headquarters:** United Kingdom
- **2021 Revenue:** $61 million
- **No. of Employees:** 200 to 500
- **Industry:** Research and Intelligence
- **Other:** More than 100 years old

The agency had its work cut out for it, given its historic nature and esteem across several industries. It would not be a straightforward task to bring a new CMS into a complex and sophisticated intelligence-publishing operation that was already established and functioning.

THE CHALLENGES

The principal difficulty was in finding a sufficiently capable content management solution that was also highly mature and could operate seamlessly in a very integrated and complex environment. The agency needed something able to handle two major types of content: (1) core unstructured textual content sets such as authored news and analyses and (2) long-form reference copy. And the system had to be just as good at long-term curation and maintenance of "evergreen" reference content.

Another challenge was the sheer scale of the content the replacement CMS had to manage. The agency's reference content is a vast and complicated dataset containing tens of thousands of profiles of equipment, countries, and military and terrorist organizations. In turn, each of these profiles is constructed from individual content fragments numbering more than 200,000. So the solution would have to readily support modular content and templates at scale as well.

Customers With Robust, Specialized Needs

But the requirements didn't stop there: Any solution would also need to support the specialized needs of the agency's customers. In particular, content had to be updatable on a continual basis by a global team of experts and published to the agency's subscriber site, often in multiple languages—including English, Arabic, and Japanese—while supporting air-gapped offline customers as well.

In addition, the company would need specialized customizations unique to its business and required any prospective solution to have a product team that could readily help it meet these requirements. The content migration process also had to be rigorous and ensure that all content maintained the agency's high standard for quality, accuracy, and formatting. Reliability was also paramount: More than 100 internal users and many thousands of external users counted on the functioning of corporate content flows to carry out vital business.

This became a tall ask for any off-the-shelf content management solution, compelling the agency to search widely for one that could meet its needs.

THE SOLUTION

The CMS the agency ultimately selected was from the next-generation content management firm Brightspot. The agency required a vendor willing to deeply understand its unique needs and ensure that the platform would meet them. Brightspot quickly stepped in with its experienced product team.

As the head of the agency's content and architecture team noted about the solution, "Brightspot's developers were highly engaged from the outset and didn't just listen but actually considered and understood our content and needs and were highly responsive. The customizations required for Brightspot were significant and required some adjustments to the core architecture of their platform, because our content is encyclopedic and complex in its structure, unlike the predominantly single-document news-based content the rest of the industry is used to. They worked very hard to take the load off of our developers by delivering the content in the same format as our legacy system so as to limit our need to rearchitect our own systems to accept a new delivery format."

Figure 1. The Firm's Brightspot Solution Manages Hundreds of Thousands of Items of Legacy Content
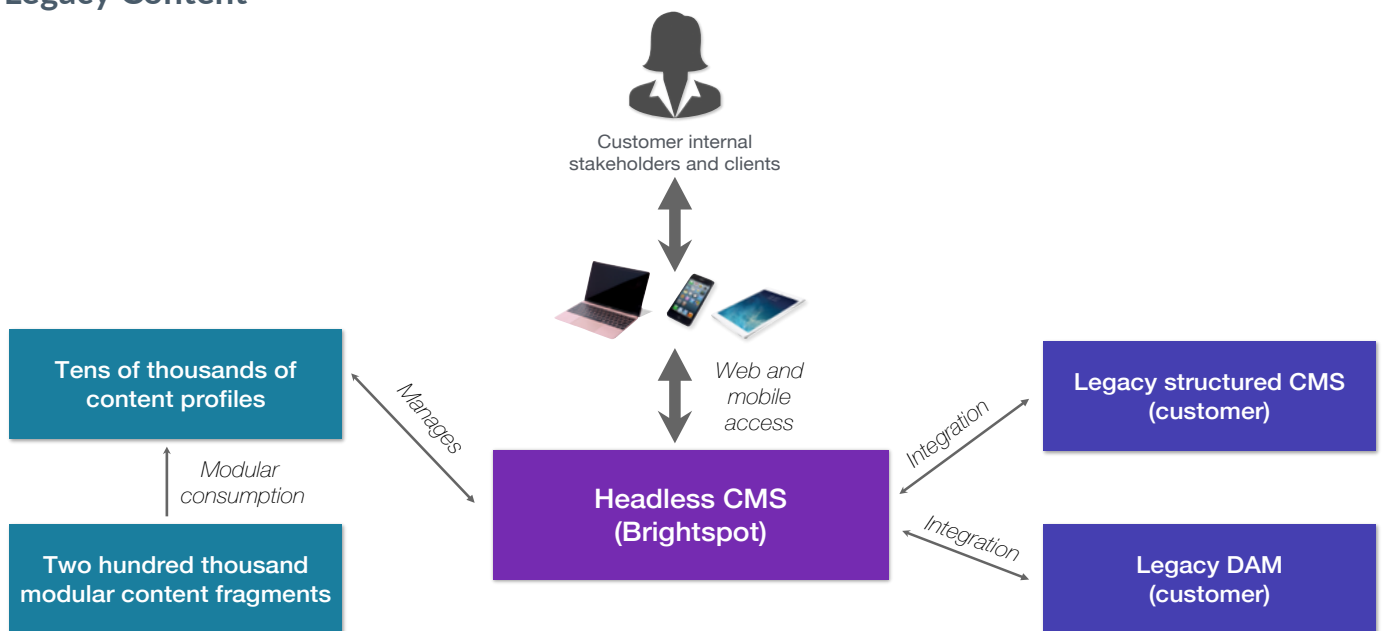
Source: Constellation Research

Brightspot quickly addressed the agency's integration needs. The solution was soon installed as the primary interface between the agency's digital-asset-management (DAM) system and its content sets, linking together the assets—which were primarily imagery but also included related document attachments—and the relevant Brightspot document. Brightspot quickly established links to other systems as well, including an internal data manager that is the CMS for highly structured company data and feeds several taxonomies into Brightspot.

The result was a modern, entirely web-based CMS, complete with migrated legacy content, that could handle the profoundly complex material, rigorous workflows and deep integration, with the high performance and reliability the company required.

THE IMPACT

The Brightspot CMS had numerous positive effects on the company's business, including:

The Technologies
· Web and headless content management · Modular content · Open APIs · Workflow

- **Reliability.** The company has experienced no unscheduled downtime due to the platform. Even when significant update deployments have occurred, the scheduled downtime has been minimal. This contrasts with weekly unscheduled downtime in the old platform, with significant impact on users—potentially an hour or more across more than 100 users per update.

- **Speed.** Brightspot is much faster than the previous system. Content that previously took as long as 60 to 90 seconds to load now loads in less than five seconds.

- **Accessibility.** The web-based access without cumbersome virtual-private-network (VPN) connections or other intermediary interfaces is greatly beneficial to productivity and removes significant obstacles to users. Brightspot is clean and easy to access from any location or mobile device. It removes reliance on IT services to set up and problem-solve.

- **Modern architecture.** The agency now has a fully capable contemporary CMS with a long shelf life and with all the latest headless and modular content capabilities, easy integration of new IT systems, and sophisticated architecture designed for complex workflows and content structures.

THE TAKEAWAYS

The agency's successful Brightspot deployment offers several key takeaways, among them the following lessons learned:

> *"The system is much faster than the precursor system. Content load times are instantaneous where they could be 60-90 seconds in the past. Brightspot was the best headless CMS solution from our down selection of providers."*
>
> — A Defense Intelligence Agency Senior Content Manager

- It's very challenging to migrate legacy CMSs, especially for businesses that have been in operation for a long time and have much older systems. Be sure that the vendor is fully ready to support you in adapting your legacy content to its new system. In this case, Brightspot provided the strong support necessary for success.

- Make sure to thoroughly ensure that the candidate solution provides all needed critical capabilities up front, even if they must be customized. In this case, Brightspot was selected after a rigorous analysis phase, with the vendor able to make some product adjustments to maximize the platform's usefulness.

- Easy integration with other systems is critical to enabling a modern CMS to work within a large digital context to support the business. The agency was able to put Brightspot to work with its other CMS system and DAM platforms quickly, and integration with these systems was not an issue in the migration to the new CMS.

ROI

- Content management performance improved by 12x or more.

- System downtime was greatly reduced.

- People could access the CMS system far more easily, from anywhere.

- The agency saved on IT staff, due to less support overhead and easier system access.

- The new CMS helped make the company sustainable and future-ready.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Constellation advises that businesses seeking to migrate to a modern headless CMS system consider the following recommendations:

- For more-complex needs, ensure that your CMS vendor is willing to work with you at a product level, if necessary, to meet critical requirements.

- Conduct a thorough feature comparison and needs assessment to ensure that there are no surprises after product selection.

- If older legacy CMSs with aging formats are to be migrated, ensure that the upgrade project is prepared for the level of effort necessary to transform and validate the converted content.

- Evaluate any candidate CMS system to ensure that it has an easy integration path with other systems in the business, even if that path must be developed on demand.

Dion Hinchcliffe

Vice President and Principal Analyst

Dion Hinchcliffe is an internationally recognized digital thought leader, industry analyst, business strategist, enterprise architect, transformation consultant, and keynote speaker. He is widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in enterprise IT.

Currently a VP and principal analyst of Constellation Research, Hinchcliffe is a well-known industry expert on the topics of digital transformation, CIO issues, digital workplace, ecosystem strategy, digital business, and next-generation enterprises. His thought leadership can be found on *ZDNet, ebizQ, On Digital Strategy,* and *Enterprise Irregulars*. He is co-author of the bestselling *Social Business by Design* (John Wiley & Sons).

Hinchcliffe is an executive fellow at the Tuck Center for Digital Strategies and was recently identified as one of the top three people most mentioned by IT leaders. Industry analytics firm Onalytica ranks Hinchcliffe as the No. 2 influencer globally on the subject of digital transformation. He has keynoted or spoken at hundreds of leading industry conferences, including CeBIT, KMWorld, IT Roadmap, Dreamforce, CIO Perspectives, AIIM Conference, IBM Connect, and other industry events.

🐦 **@DHinchcliffe**   💻 **constellationr.com/users/dion-hinchcliffe**   in **linkedin.com/in/dhinchcliffe**

ABOUT CONSTELLATION RESEARCH

Constellation Research is an award-winning, Silicon Valley–based research and advisory firm that helps organizations navigate the challenges of digital disruption through business model transformation and the judicious application of disruptive technologies. Unlike the legacy analyst firms, Constellation Research is disrupting how research is accessed, what topics are covered, and how clients can partner with a research firm to achieve success. Over 350 clients have joined from an ecosystem of buyers, partners, solution providers, C-suite, boards of directors, and vendor clients. Our mission is to identify, validate, and share insights with our clients.

Organizational Highlights

· Named Institute of Industry Analyst Relations (IIAR) New Analyst Firm of the Year in 2011 and #1 Independent Analyst Firm for 2014 and 2015.

· Experienced research team with an average of 25 years of practitioner, management, and industry experience.

· Organizers of the Constellation Connected Enterprise—an innovation summit and best practices knowledge-sharing retreat for business leaders.

· Founders of Constellation Executive Network, a membership organization for digital leaders seeking to learn from market leaders and fast followers.

www.ConstellationR.com   @ConstellationR

info@ConstellationR.com   sales@ConstellationR.com

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