



WordPress in 2025

and the massive enterprise
opportunity it presents.

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WP:25

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2025 will be a huge year for WordPress, and most enterprise decision-makers will miss the opportunity. Here's a quick overview of what's at stake →

- How the shift, not iteration, of WordPress' new editor has huge implications for enterprise productivity and budgeting.
- How AI combined with open-source will disrupt the CMS space for years to come — open ecosystems *triumphing* over closed-source point-features.
- How headless-first CMS's are now industry laggards and what it means for "hybrid" or "universal" CMS's such as WordPress.

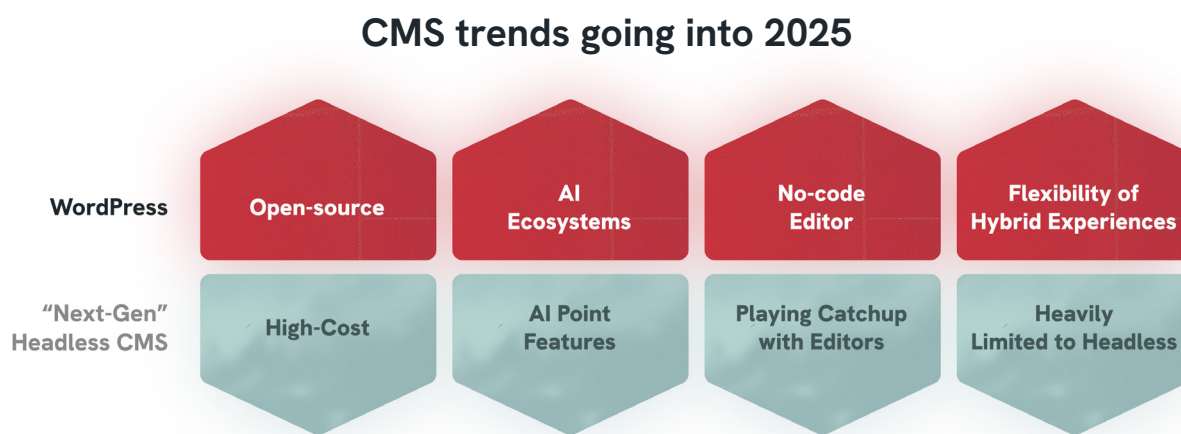
Since the 2020s, WordPress has often been labeled as a "legacy" CMS by proprietary or emerging headless competitors. In the coming years however, we are once again going to witness why WordPress is the most dominant CMS on the web today. True open-source simply has a way of enduring market cycles, continuing to innovate through periods of high volatility, whilst other proprietary vendors end up stagnating. This is especially true through turbulent market times. We saw this during the dotcom bubble, when Apache surpassed Microsoft's IIS. Or also during the subprime mortgage crisis, when MySQL/PostgreSQL gained traction over Oracle. The CMS is one of those commoditised foundations of the web now.

Let's dive into the key points that put WordPress on your 5-year roadmap →

- The CMS Trade: Long Open-Source, Short Proprietary
- The most advanced no-code editor on the market
- The 100x Play: AI and the Rebirth of WordPress
- Headless is dead, long live Headless
- We're not done yet
- How you can prepare for WordPress in 2025

1 The CMS trade: long open-source, short proprietary

You've probably noticed that the huge over-spending by “next-gen” CMS's on growth initiatives has been fizzling out. This is happening just at a time when 2025 enterprise budgets are rotating to Gen-AI, CDPs, cybersecurity and more. These factors combined are creating a perfect storm, prompting enterprise to revisit open-source CMSs such as WordPress and Drupal, and for good reason — there are many moves at play in 2025:



Taking a step back for a moment, the hype of the last few years has cooled off, and the CMS category is becoming extremely commoditised — ironically, this is most painful for those companies which were loudest in 2021. They will have to seek out new profit margins away from outdated and expensive **seat licenses** towards **AI credits or a consumption** model. A good example is Salesforce, which indicated they will charge **\$2+ per AI chat conversation**¹ (this is being sold as a cost saving to the customer, though the aggregate year-on-year cost is likely more expensive).

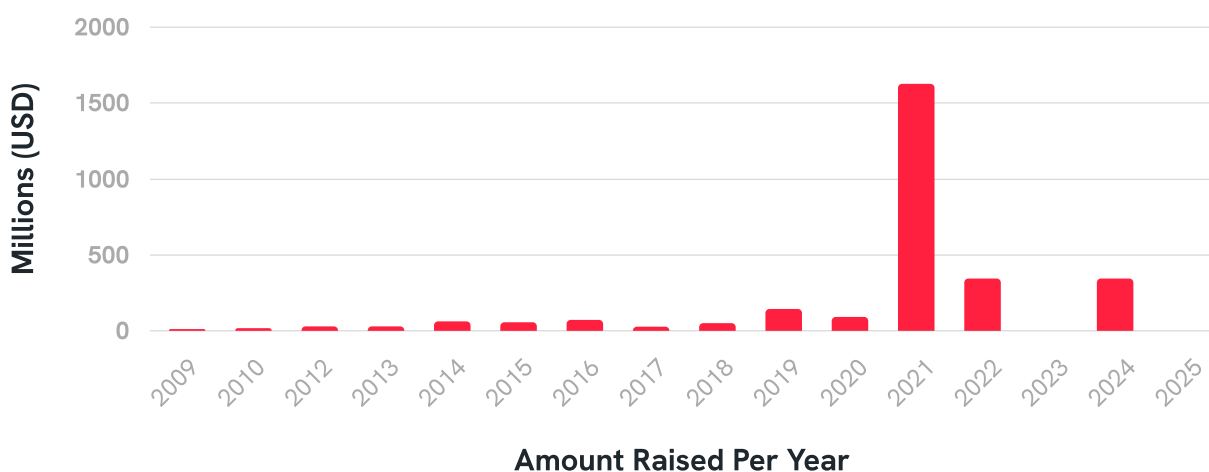
And this is coming at a time when cloud-LLMs will or are already becoming commoditised — Amazon just released their Nova LLM models which are insanely inexpensive, a trend which will only continue. Once the hype fades and customers don't want such high mark-ups anymore, many costly vendors will fade into stagnation and/or oblivion. Customers, especially enterprises, want to use their own LLM API keys (and these AI consumption pricing layers aren't adding any edge to the equation).

¹ <https://www.cio.com/article/3499283/salesforce-mulls-consumption-pricing-for-ai-agents.html>

// As Matt Mullenweg, co-founder of WordPress, once said: **"I believe all proprietary software to be an evolutionary dead end."**

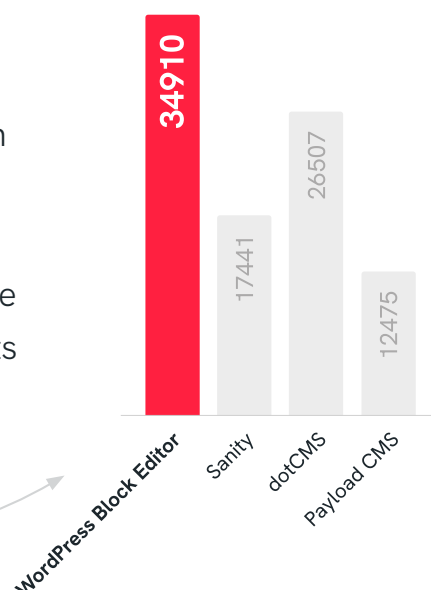
The CMS category will feel this the most as we emerge out of the 2022+ global downturn. And the threshold for platform switching is very low, I've personally witnessed websites with 2-year end-of-life contracts get a last-minute lift-and-shift to WordPress to drive further cost savings (despite such little time left, breakage fees and vendor-change friction).

CMS Sector Fundraising by Year



Fundraising basket, includes following vendors:
Optimizely, Contentful, Contentstack, Sanity, Bloomreach, Kentico, Storyblok, Sitecore.

Whilst proprietary CMS's will have to forgo innovation for operational efficiency, WordPress is truly finding its stride in this new era. Its maturity in the block editor is starting to show — **amassing a total of 34k code commits** to its repository. Just taking a step back here — can you actually imagine that? A single WordPress feature has more commits than entire competing projects?



There are 2 trends here:

1

Innovation is **slowing down** for closed-sourced CMSs

2

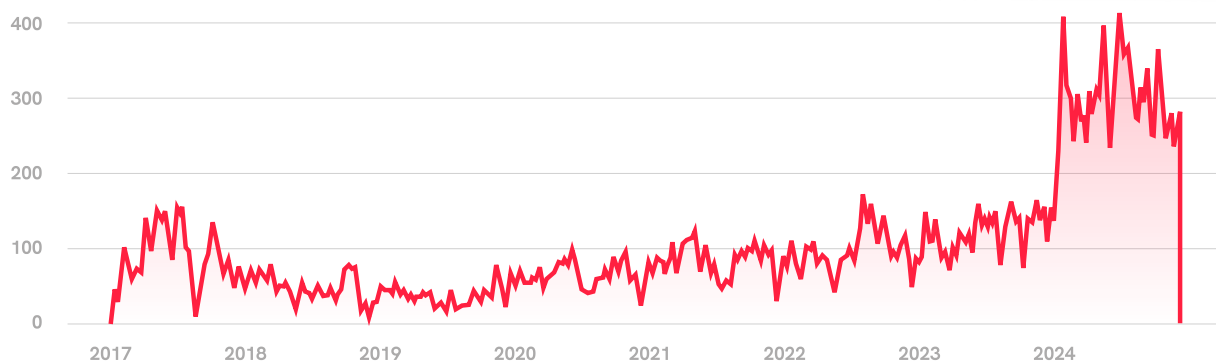
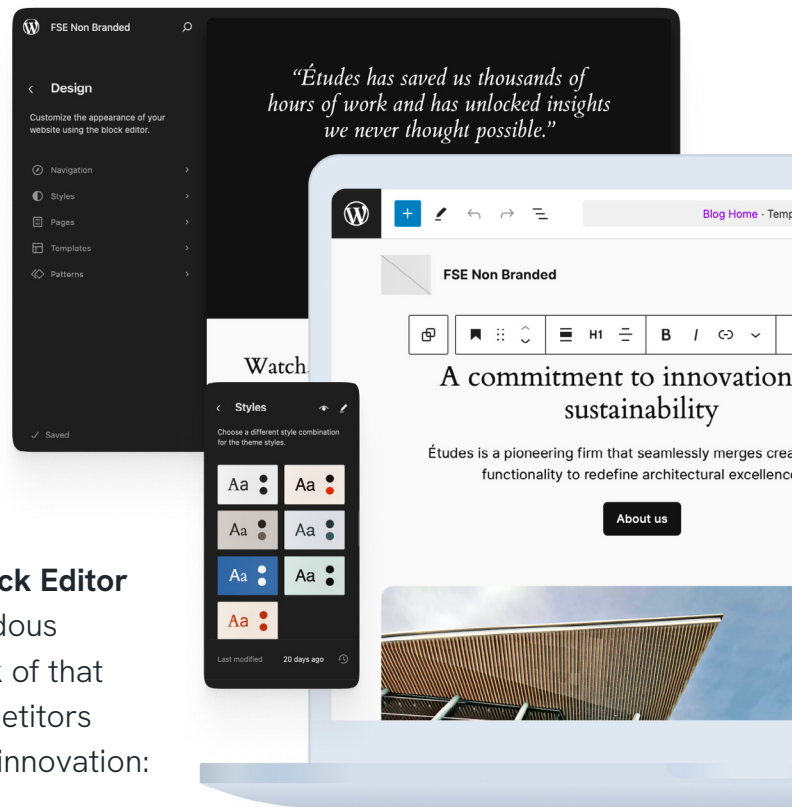
WordPress, through all its work in the last year, **provides an incredibly high starting-point.**

At a very minimum, we will see a lot of momentum for open-source projects, especially in sectors already close to it: government, higher education, INGOs, etc. At the same time, enterprises will once again seek it out as the secondary CMS of choice (where they want speed and cost-efficiency, but can't yet displace their primary CMS).

In the last year, we have seen entirely new or refreshed WordPress platforms for NASA, Disney, CNN, The New York Post, Harvard and Amnesty International. Whilst it was previously humorous to think that many proprietary platform choices were due to the old saying "Nobody ever got fired for hiring IBM", this era of work protection may be over in the CMS space — the gaps in capabilities and total cost of ownership are becoming too large to ignore.

The most advanced no-code editor on the market

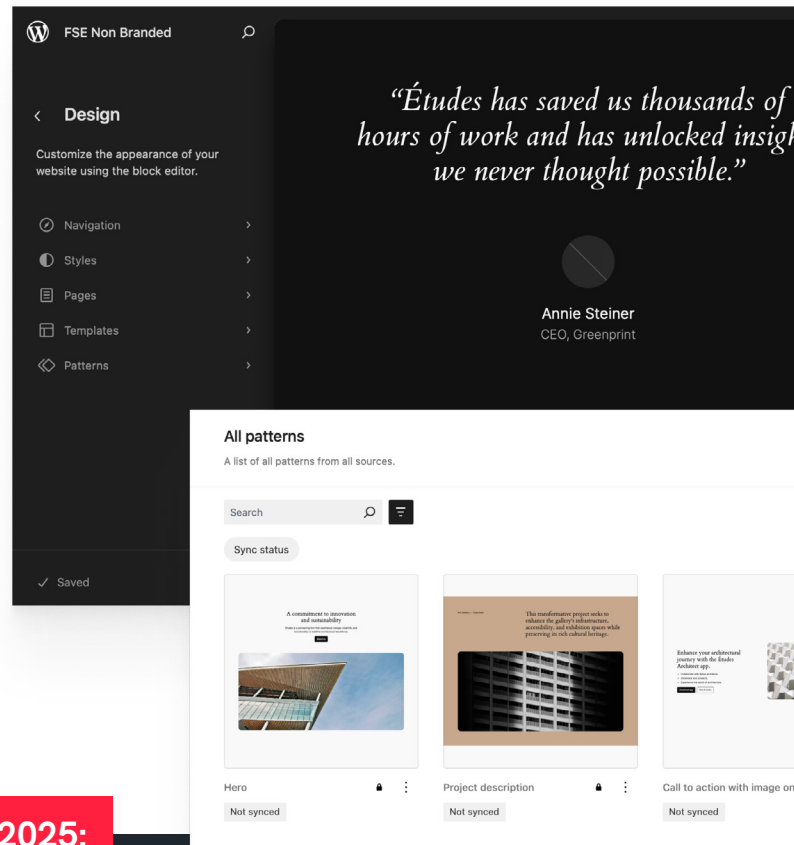
At the core of this industry is content, which for WordPress has been a 21+ year long journey. The act of creation is fascinating, and the playing field is really starting to spread in terms of quality and maturity. As mentioned before, the **Block Editor** (previously “Gutenberg”) has had a tremendous amount of effort invested, but a huge chunk of that has been in 2024, just at a time when competitors have had to cut back on development and innovation:



This huge effort has created an editor that has **gone unmatched by any other CMS in the industry**, but more importantly, now provides a strong baseline to build out various force-multipliers (which were previously not possible to assemble without years or even decades of underlying and fundamental code).

Having a point-feature that demos well with CxOs simply won't deliver on live platforms without strong and extensible foundations. With WordPress in 2025, the enterprise finally has the ability to extend and customise their own editors in a way that is truly low-code and at the same time demonstrating high-ROI.

A good example of such a force-multiplier is **Full-Site Editing (FSE)**, giving marketers and other no-code users the easy ability to create custom page templates (not just page content), within brand guidelines and other internal rules. The flexibility and ability to customise, expand, and restrict its powers are unparalleled in the space. The enterprise can customise an editor to make it their own; this was never possible before at this scale.



Enterprise actions in 2025:

- Augment your sites to use **Full-Site Editing (FSE)**; enabling marketing and content-creating teams to design and customise every part of a website — headers, menus, footers, templates, and more — directly in the block editor without coding. This **singular workflow** removes additional screens and a layer of custom development that was traditionally outsourced and time-consuming.
- Convert your WordPress theme into a **Block Theme**; a type of WordPress theme built entirely with blocks, designed to integrate seamlessly with Full-Site Editing for complete flexibility and customisation. Remove the need for development teams entirely, especially on microsites, landing pages, etc. This opens the door to entire enterprise-grade no-code websites.
- Evaluate the two to four year total cost versus savings for such an initiative. Work with partners such as ourselves to conduct an audit of your existing platform. There are a number of “enterprise gotchas” for FSE which we’ve also figured out for larger and more complex projects.





3

The 100x play: AI and the rebirth of WordPress

One of the largest growth curves WordPress ever had was being the first popular user-friendly tool for publishing online. In its early days, this alone helped WordPress take over 10%+ market share, which all happened very quickly and without much notice.

I think we're once again on the brink of such a growth curve, especially within enterprise where the innovations of the last year really help unlock new opportunities, and faster paths to value generation — AI is at the forefront of this shift.

While proprietary vendors are all rushing to implement AI point features in a way that drives short-term growth and hype, WordPress has the opportunity through its incredible contributor population to not only build those features but also, much more importantly, an **exciting multi-agent and LLM-agnostic ecosystem** that represents an **intelligent content operating system** — the necessary foundation to create infinite AI point features customised to your business needs.

What propelled WordPress into a golden era then, will do so again now. However, most enterprises will not leverage this opportunity in time and be caught offside — hindsight will be 20/20.

Imagine an ecosystem whereby **every plugin can augment itself with an agent** (following best practices and standards) that is then leveraged and chained together through an **AI orchestrator**. For example: “I need a contact page capturing basic contact information and the possibility to upload a PDF document” may subsequently orchestrate the following AI agents: Pages, Blocks, Forms, SEO and more.

WordPress, due to its open-source nature, will be slower to release such an ecosystem, but once it does, growth will once again erupt as the value from such compounding is exponential.

Drupal has already launched a prototype of this (even if more basic than described above).

The CMS reimagined in 2025

	Point Feature	Ecosystem
Open-Source	10x	100x Real Agentic AI
Closed-Source /Proprietary	1x One-Trick Pony	10x

Enterprise actions in 2025:

- Zooming out, much of where AI is today is not about limited capabilities, but a lack of imagination. Creating content with AI was fun, but not something you’re actually supposed to do to drive competitive edge. It only creates mid-curve content. It’s not good or bad, just lurking in the middle — meaning it won’t rank, or help you grow in any way. In the end, it’s just noise (which can hurt your SEO). The real unlock is in AI-adjacent creative work, AI-driven operational efficiency, etc. Prompting AI to “Write a post about X...” will only waste your time and dilute your exposure — but just getting to that next incremental level is an unlock.
- Seeing how fast AI moves, it’s important to stay on top of current and trending models, applications, point features and more.
- Understand your largest and most time-consuming content workflows/chokepoints — this should be a mix of today’s real challenges and tomorrow’s ambitions. Work with an agency such as ours to understand what is compatible with the future of WordPress and is a good fit to build out in this ecosystem. In many cases, you’ll be looking at a hybrid approach, where you AI-augment existing processes whilst still keeping human creation and/or control in the mix — the most pragmatic approach to an evolving field.

Headless is dead, long live headless

WordPress has long supported API-driven experiences, largely through its robust and flexible REST API. Whilst a full headless build is very resource-intensive, we see a number of hybrid websites leveraging the best of both worlds (using CMS-driven templates for the 90% long tail, and 10% headless for the high-traffic/high-interactivity portions of a web experience). This allows businesses to maximise outcomes for budget, as well as reduce time-to-market for creators. The pure headless approach simply never took off for large complex sites.

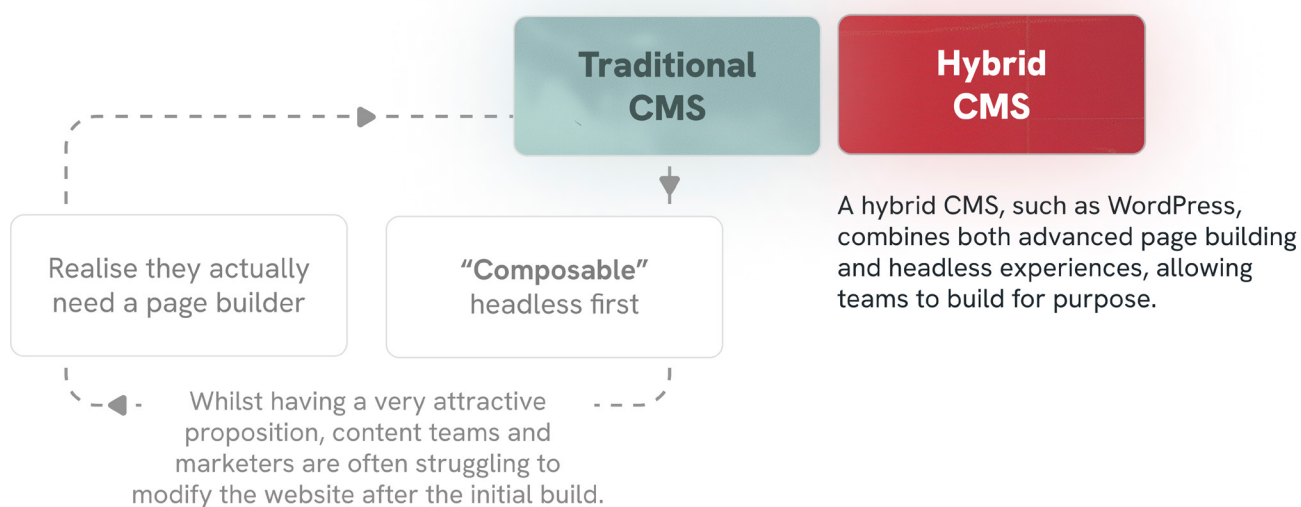
This is the reality that pure-play headless CMS vendors are now facing; having to work “backwards” in order to integrate templated/monolithic features to make it easier for marketers to create content. Contentful Studio, Sanity Studio, and dotCMS Universal Visual Editor are all examples of very basic block editor implementations which are far behind WordPress itself — this, despite their narratives continually being presented as “next-gen”. This is happening at a time when their funding/margins are being squeezed, in the process really hampering their innovation in the next two years.

Take Contentful for example, a headless darling of 2021. They have slashed their ad-spend (image below), whilst negative employee reviews on Glassdoor are mounting (speaking of slowing growth and being slow to react to market needs). It's unfortunate to see, but the CMS space is simply very competitive - especially when open-source projects such as WordPress and Drupal are able to continue innovation during turbulent times.

Performance - average paid traffic cost



You will now see the language of headless CMSs shifting away from the “composable” era, back to more fundamental language such as content “operating system” or content “platform”. Likewise, from “headless”, to “hybrid or universal” CMS. Turns out that maybe WordPress wasn’t such a legacy solution after all, but the actual market leader? Always look past the hype narrative to actual capabilities.





Enterprise actions in 2025:

- Be very cautious adopting a pure-play headless CMS into your stack, as you may unnecessarily add a product that's on a downtrend. Some have realised far too late that they actually DO need a “page builder”, and are now having to make up for this gap in very unfavourable conditions (squeezed margins, underwater valuations, budget cuts, etc.)
- Consider leveraging WordPress' extensive headless capabilities to build high-touch interactive experiences on a case-by-case basis. WordPress has a lower profile in headless because the open-source project doesn't do any product marketing, but many Next.js frontends out there are powered by WordPress content APIs, usually through open-source starter kits and integrations. You'll be surprised at what high level a headless experience can be powered by WordPress.

How you can get the most out of WordPress in 2025

As you can see, 2025 will be a year to double-down on WordPress as it races ahead of the pack in many areas. Here is some parting advice:

- WordPress has gone through **a lot of change in the last 2 years**, and that innovation curve is continuing. Consider taking a fresh look at your stack and properties to best understand what the opportunities and savings are.
- Tread carefully with headless-first vendors unless you're sure you'll only build web experiences that are 100% headless or only use a JS frontend. If you're seeking to build out enterprise web experiences across multiple teams, projects, and beyond, you'll absolutely require a hybrid CMS approach instead of one that only supports one side of the coin.
- The AI and CMS crossover is far from hitting its stride. Commercial CMSs rushed to market with snazzy point features, but ultimately open-source CMSs such as Drupal and WordPress will bring true AI depth. Look for this to start materialising in Q2-Q3 2025.
- There are a number of new core features, as well as third-party plugins, which help drive WordPress into new and refreshing digital experiences. Talk to an agency like ours to understand how to implement interactivity, personalisation, experimentation, analytics, and more.

Closing off, we at Human Made are incredibly excited about the new year, which will become one of WordPress' largest and most important years yet. Its wide breadth of (new) functionality and capabilities, mixed with its huge ecosystem have put it at the forefront of CMSs for the 2025 to 2030 era of content.

² <https://github.com/WordPress/gutenberg>



About the author

Having built his first website back in 1995, Noel Tock has long been watching the evolution of the CMS space.

Now co-owner at leading enterprise WordPress agency Human Made, his belief in the power of open source is as great as ever. Human Made specialises in CMS, DXP, headless, AI and personalised digital experiences. If these things are on your roadmap feel free to reach out to Noel at noel@humanmade.com.



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