

Magnolia Stories app kicks new life into Voetbal International

How the oldest football magazine in the Netherlands used Magnolia in hybrid headless mode to publish fast and win more revenue



Industry
Media & Publishing

Country
Netherlands

Implemented by
info.nl

Site
vi.nl

Mathijs Kraai, head of IT and product owner at Voetbal International (VI) explains:

“As a publisher with big dreams and ambitions, it was not easy to find the right product for our digital platform. Our requirements included handling peak traffic, super-optimized editorial workflows, heavy personalization, all the while being developer-friendly.

Upon realizing that the perfect CMS does not exist out of the box, we quickly warmed up to Magnolia’s integration platform philosophy. It provides us with the tools we need to simply build and integrate exactly what we need ourselves.

The missing piece of the puzzle was a content editing interface. Whether it’s breaking news that needs to be published right this second, or a full-fledged reading experience with a multitude of design elements and widgets, Magnolia’s Stories app now provides it all. And the best part? All content is structured in a way that makes it completely re-usable across all of our channels and beyond to third parties.”



“Super-quick publishing, full editorial freedom to create rich reading experiences, re-using content across all of our channels—Magnolia’s Stories app helps us to do all this successfully.”

— Mathijs Kraai, Product Owner, Voetbal International

The challenge

A race against the clock

Publishing breaking news, like sports and football, can be brutal. A key requirement is the ability to peak.

"It's a race against the clock," says VI's Product Owner, Mathijs Kraai. "A bit exaggerated, but the publisher that is first to publish the news gets all the traffic." This means that a CMS has to be easy to use, to enable the fast creation of articles and other content.

Peaks bring challenges for publishers. If there is big, breaking news, an editor sends a push message to registered users, then in one go, the number of active users increases tenfold. If content is slow or delayed, the user experience suffers. A digital platform has to be able to take on peak loads and to scale this in the future.

VI also wanted to personalize the online experience, to reflect content preferences in order to increase reader loyalty and engagement.

The solution



Content management that's future-proof and user-friendly

VI and its implementation partner, info.nl, chose to use Magnolia CMS in a hybrid headless fashion: both using Magnolia's traditional server-side rendering, and exposing REST APIs that serve all kinds of distribution channels. New apps were developed that are directly connected to the CMS. When new channels appear, the CMS is ready for them.

Info.nl used Magnolia to make VI's content management future-proof and user-friendly. Magnolia's Stories app was easily customized to fit in with how VI editors prefer to make, curate and distribute content in the fastest way. In contrast to other CMS authoring interfaces, editors are free to control the experience, not just fill content in fields. For example, they can arrange all elements of a story, including images and even where the paywall appears in an article.

Before the redesign of the new site, VI had worked with a paywall that excluded (in part) non-paying readers. The new structure enabled it to create VI PRO, where the black-and-white paywall has been replaced with a 'try before you buy' model. This is driving large numbers of users into the VI PRO conversion funnel: everyone can now read five PRO articles free of charge before receiving a subscription offer. Using previous surfing patterns, the platform now makes personalized content suggestions. This brings even more visitors into contact with premium content and opens up opportunities for some to be converted via the metered model to a paid PRO subscription.

The result:

Fast publishing, more readers

Shortly after the launch of the site and mobile apps in April 2017, VI saw the first successes. VI is now consistently the first to publish and distribute news and match reports via push notifications to the apps. The platform also coped with the high loads of all kinds of peak periods.

More noteworthy is the commercial effect. PRO content is more popular than ever with a 35% increase in page views, close to 3,000 new account registrations per week and growing subscription numbers. One of the most popular articles on the near-appointment of the Dutch national football coach was read 130,000 times and led to 2,600 new users signing up.

Since going live, the new platform achieved:

- Better overall traffic and increased time on site
- Growing account registrations and digital subscription numbers
- Improved editor and developer happiness
- Better performance during peak traffic
- Much quicker publication and distribution of news