

How to design a CMS that sets website managers up for success

WordPress Vienna Meetup · October 2025

Little
Language
Models



About me

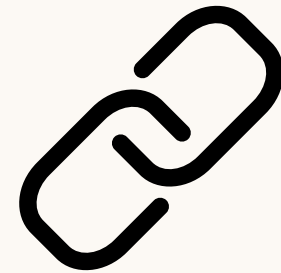
- **Delfina Hoxha** (she/her)
- Founder of Little Language Models
- Worked with tech startups, leading agencies, orgs, and Fortune 500 companies
- Albanian based in beautiful Vienna
- Building with WordPress since 2015

Through clear language and data-driven content organization (a practice known as **information architecture**), I've supported multiple clients like Sony and Microsoft in:

-
- ① increasing conversion rates
-
- ① reducing customer service costs
-
- ① reducing learning curves for new users
-
- ① increasing Customer Satisfaction Scores
-

30+

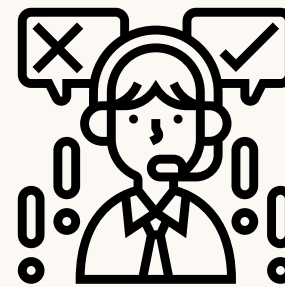
Led the navigation redesign of 30+ enterprise websites and apps



Worked on various CMS overhauls



Led UX writing for key flows for vision AI plugin (ClassifAI) and search plugin (ElasticPress)



Interviewed multiple CMS stakeholders

Key concepts

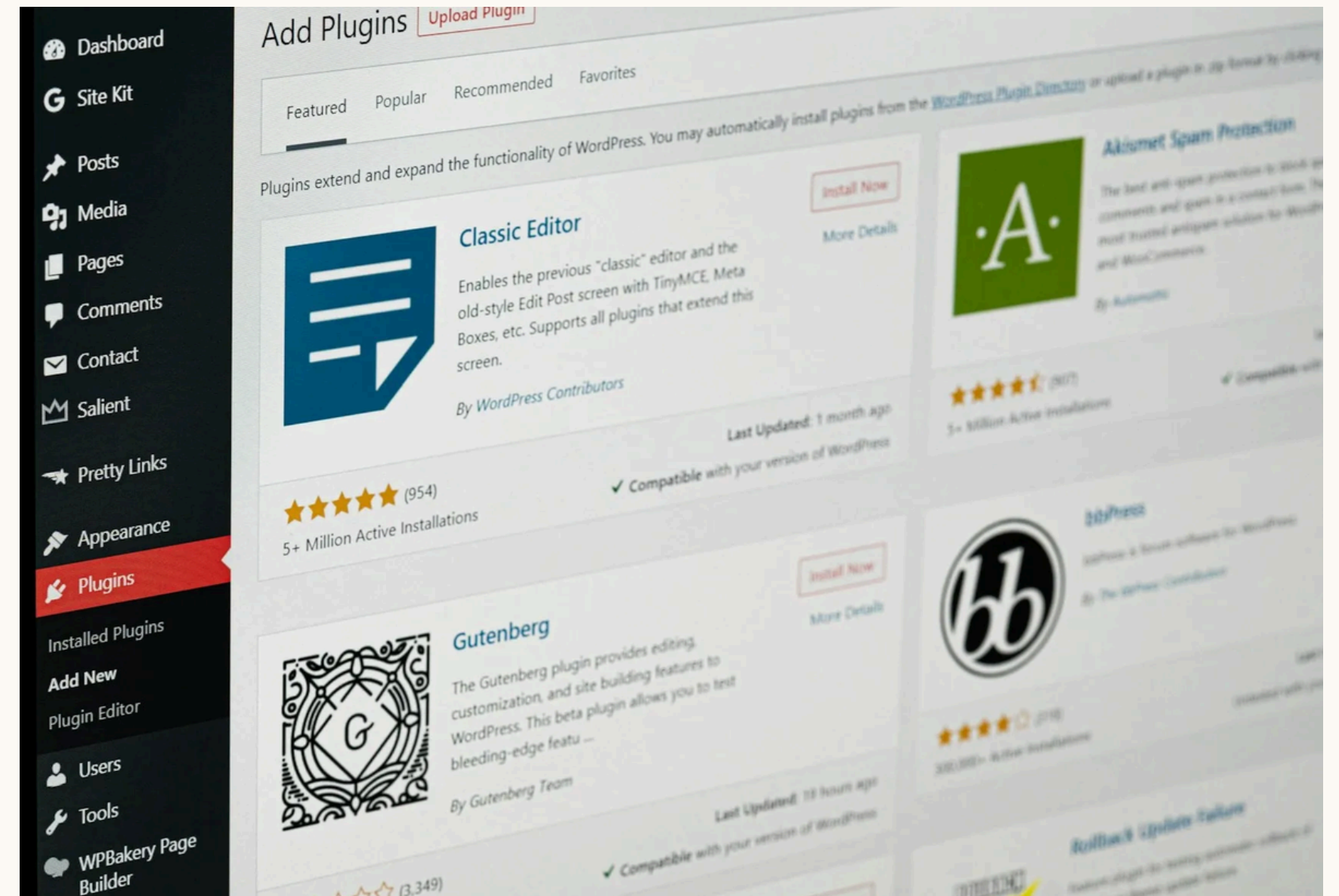
In this presentation, I'll share how to:

- get buy-in for CMS UX work
- boost content efficiency
- transform your UX for internal users

A content management system (CMS) is a software used to create, publish, and edit digital content.

- WordPress
- Shopify
- HubSpot
- Adobe Experience Manager
- Ghost
- Sitecore

Over 43% of all websites use WordPress, and WordPress powers more than 60% of CMSs.




wordpress.com/blog/2025/04/17/wordpress-market-share

Investing in a well-designed, user-friendly CMS offers several benefits:

- Improved experience for the people who bring your content to life (usually ContentOps or website content managers)
- Reduced time for content publishing and editing
- Improved publishing workflow using rules and permissions strategically
- Increased trustworthiness through consistency
- Reduced onboarding time for new employees


A WordPress CMS plugin page displaying 4 notifications before users can see the page contents

Plugins [Add Plugin](#) Screen Options Help



Grab your customers' attention by displaying more product images on WooCommerce archive pages with xThumbs.

[Buy Now](#) | [View Demo](#) | [Hide for 1 month](#)

[Set up your Akismet account](#) Almost done! Configure Akismet and say goodbye to spam 

Storefront Product Sharing requires that you use Storefront as your parent theme. [Install Storefront now](#)

WooCommerce database update required

WooCommerce has been updated! To keep things running smoothly, we have to update your database to the newest version. The database update process runs in the background and may take a little while, so please be patient. Advanced users can alternatively update via [WP CLI](#).

[Update WooCommerce Database](#) [Learn more about updates](#)

All (25) | [Active](#) (22) | [Inactive](#) (3) | **Update Available** (16) | [Must-Use](#) (1) | [Drop-in](#) (1)

Search installed plugins

OOPS

People involved in CMS redesigns sometimes have contradicting goals.



User goals

For CMSs, many users describe pains related to grouping items, referencing sources, and review status.

- Clearer admin interface
- Implementing nested categorization to reduce the need for manual tagging
- Displaying items within specific timeframes
- Accommodating authors' preferences regarding the order in which names are listed, as opposed to the current arrangement (alphabetical)

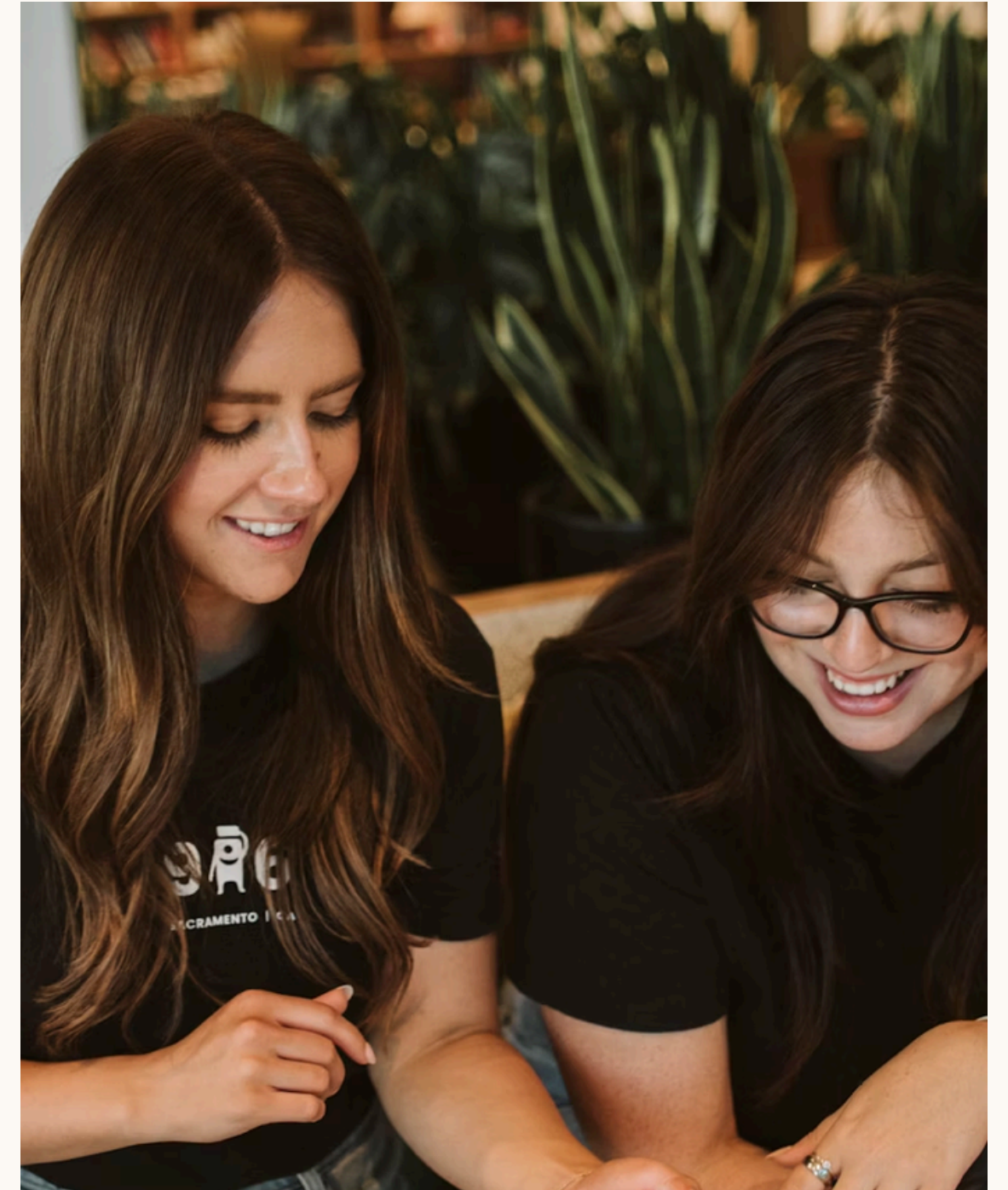
Stakeholder goals

- Reduce the time it takes admins to create or edit content
- Reduce costs
- Maximise content efficiency
- An improved publishing workflow between copywriters, sales, optimization analysts, designers, marketers, and developers, with clearly laid out steps and authorizations in the CMS that minimize back-and-forths

However...

Some stakeholders don't fully recognize the time and effort involved in the publishing process, and have unreasonable expectations based on the team's size and responsibilities.

This underscores the importance of understanding everyone's needs in the development of an effective CMS solution.



How to improve your CMS with information architecture

1. DEFINE GOALS

WHY

A clear definition of success sets us up for success and ensures we're not spending time or energy on initiatives that won't move the needle.

EXAMPLES

Goal category	Specific measurable objective	Business impact	UX impact
Content creation efficiency	Reduce content publishing time by 25% (from 45 to 34 minutes per piece)	Increase content team productivity, lower costs, enable faster content go-to-market	Streamline editor interface, reduce unnecessary steps, improve intuitive workflow
User engagement	Increase average time on site by 15% through improved content discoverability and site navigation	Direct correlation to ad revenue, lower bounce rates, improved SEO performance	Implement more intelligent content recommendations, enhance internal linking, optimize search functionality
Content editing efficiency	Reduce clicks required to add to a CPT by 50% (12 to 6 clicks)	Increase content team productivity, lower costs, enable faster content go-to-market	Streamline editor interface, reduce unnecessary steps, improve intuitive workflow

2. IDENTIFY THE HIGHEST- IMPACT PUBLISHING WORKFLOWS

WHY

CMSs may encompass various roles, multiple workflows, and diverse content types. You can't—and shouldn't—change the entire CMS in one go.

Work with stakeholders to identify the most impactful workflows, those with the highest usage and greatest potential for improvement.

EXAMPLES

Publishing workflows for a sports/fitness tracking platform like Strava's CMS

Workflow	User impact	Business impact
Challenge and Event content creation	Directly affects user engagement and community participation	Drives user retention and potential revenue streams
Athlete success story publishing	Provides inspirational content and social proof	Enhances platform credibility and user motivation
Performance insights and blog content management	Delivers actionable training and lifestyle information	Supports thought leadership and user education

3. REQUEST A WALKTHROUGH OF COMMON PUBLISHING WORKFLOWS

WHY

Asking the question “What needs to happen for X to go live?” and being walked through the process helps us better understand the publishing process, builds empathy, and ensures we’re not missing crucial aspects of the collaboration that happens outside the CMS.

WHY

The walkthrough helps expose vulnerabilities (a team member whose departure would leave the team unable to upload media) and workarounds (their manager can't access drafts, so they need to send screenshots or arrange a meeting to review posts).

4. DESIGN A NEW WORKFLOW DIAGRAM SPECIFYING ROLES, ACTIONS, AND CONTENT TYPES

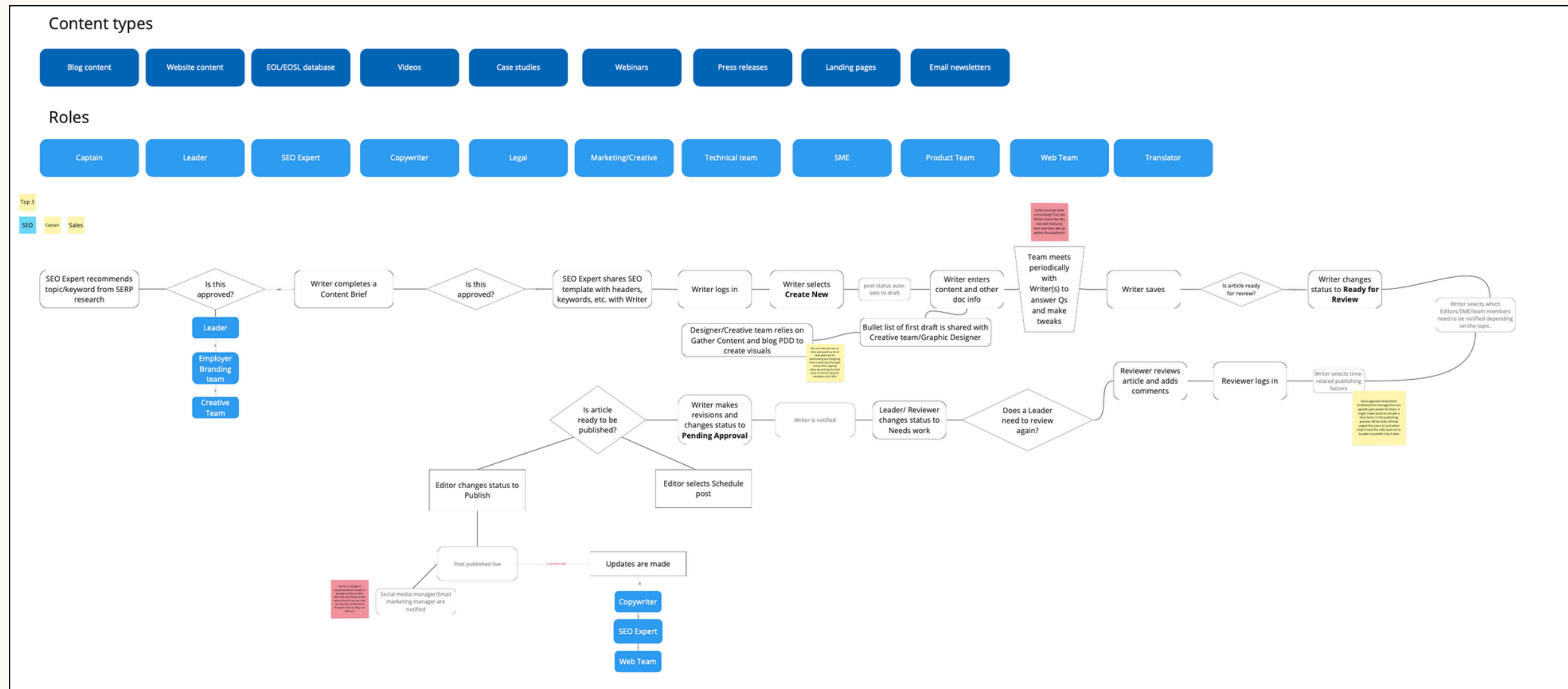
WHY

Diagrams are concise visual representations of data, facilitating understanding and interpretation. Diagrams are a great way to build alignment between stakeholders and users.

Clearly outlining who does what when, while labeling system actions, offline processes, and decisions needed, helps achieve a streamlined publishing experience.

EXAMPLE

Publishing workflows for a data center company's CMS



5. DESIGN THE NEW CMS INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE

HOW

Redesign the navigation bar, toolbar, and content sections based on the workflow diagram. The redesign should focus on simplifying language, navigation, and processes, and applying effective information architecture principles.

IA PRINCIPLES

The purpose of information architecture (IA) work can be summarized as making things more:

1. **findable** – if users are looking for something specific, they can find it easily
2. **valuable** – a lot of thought has gone into what gets prioritized, so the surfaced information helps guide users
3. **timely** – information flow is optimized to match users' needs at each step of the process, not showing too much or too little information.

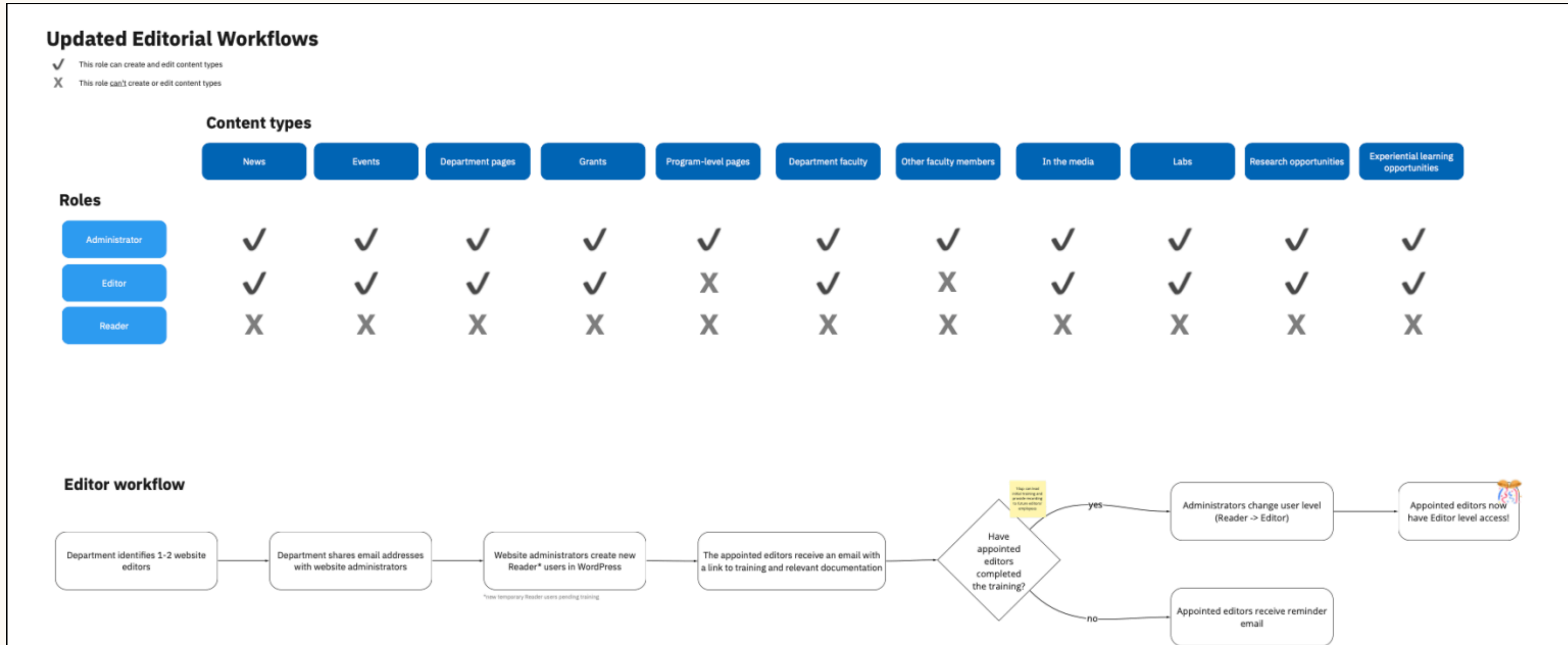
6. TEST AND ITERATE!



In the context of a university, an email notification system can be established to communicate time-sensitive information. Editors would receive email alerts as deadlines approach to ensure that the website contains accurate information for current and upcoming students.

EXAMPLE

Publishing workflows for a university's CMS



I recall a client who had 52 editors! As you can imagine, even small improvements can have a significant business impact when implemented across such a large group.



Key takeaways

Investing in a well-structured CMS provides numerous advantages for **ABCDE...**

- **Agencies**
- **Businesses**
- **Content managers**
- **Developers**
- **End-users**

Agencies

- New business opportunities
- Additional value delivered to your clients
- Opportunities for employee retention and professional development through upskilling in new methodologies and UX design

Businesses

- Increase content team productivity
- Enable faster content go-to-market
- Enhance author experience
- Increased content consistency, ultimately contributing to greater trustworthiness

When you uplift those who bring your content to life—your marketing team, ContentOps folks, and website content managers—you nurture the very soul of your brand’s story.

Content managers

- Drive user retention and revenue streams
- Increase ad revenue, reduce bounce rates, enhance SEO
- Improved author experience
- Streamlined publishing and editing processes
- More personalized content recommendations, enhanced internal linking, optimized search functionality
- Professional growth in the UX design field

Developers

- Make people's lives easier by streamlining their daily tasks
- Drive user retention and revenue streams
- Be seen as an expert and elevate your role at the crossroads of tech, business, and user experience

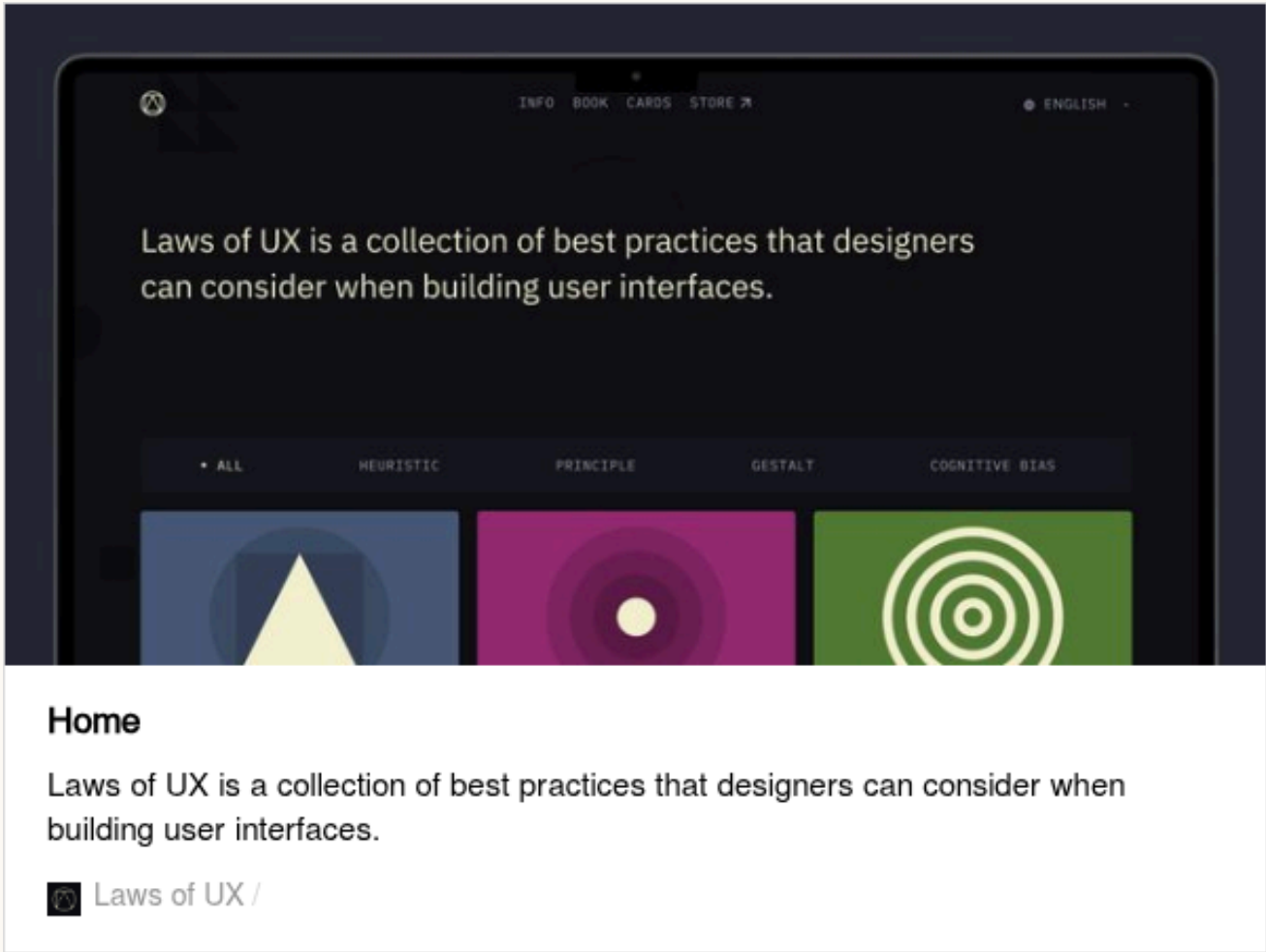
End-users interact with content that is...

- **findable** – if they're looking for something specific, they can find it easily
- **valuable** – a lot of thought has gone into what gets prioritized, so the surfaced information helps guide them
- **timely** – information flow is optimized to match users' needs at each step of the process, not showing too much or too little information

This was my process of designing CMSs that set up website managers for success.

Well-structured CMSs boost efficiency and serve as powerful tools in executing content strategy.

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Recommendations



Transform your platform Puzzling → Powerful

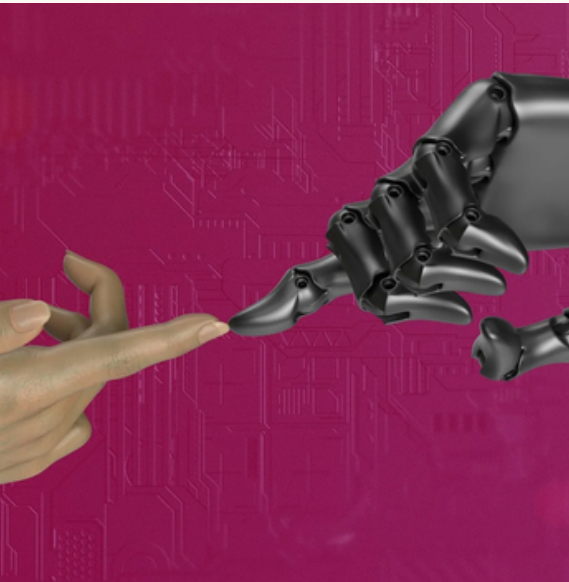
ROADMAPPING

PRODUCT AUDITS

IA REDESIGNS

CONTENT TESTING

TEAM TRAINING





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Thank you!

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