# The Content Backbone F.A.Q.

What is the „Content Backbone"?

The „Content Backbone" is **one central system that acts as a point of sharing between all production systems** in a publisher's enterprise (such as print editorial systems, web content management systems, layout systems, ECMS systems, etc.). All external feeds are sent into the backbone, all production systems feed their content into the backbone, all production systems (and other systems) can easily get content from the central backbone database.
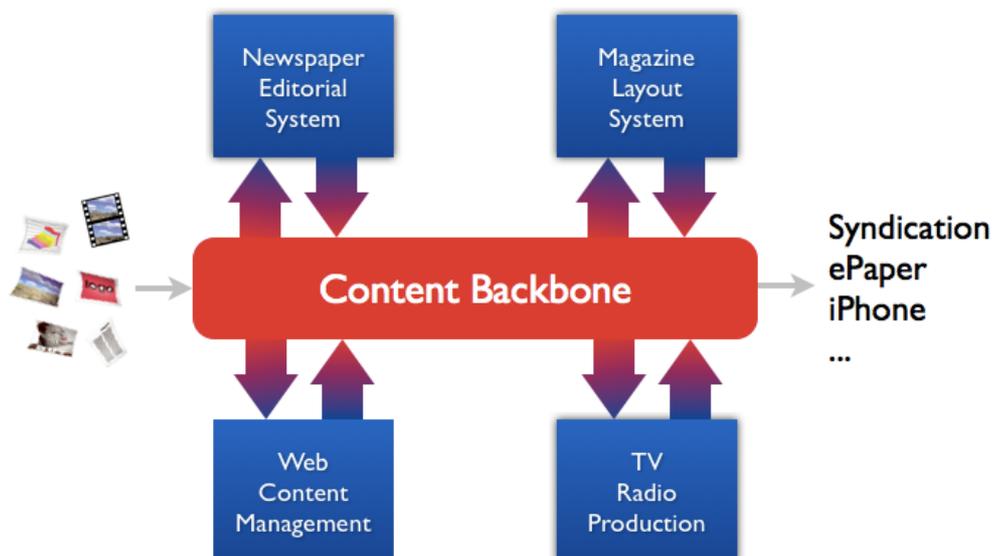
What is the difference to a traditional Media Asset Management System?

Traditional archives and media asset management systems (MAMs, DAMs) used to be like „dumpsters" at the end of the production chain. In contrast, the Backbone is the heart of all the production systems and enables sharing of both archived and up-to-date content (in some cases, up to the second content live in production).

What is the most important benefit of such a system?

While there are many benefits (like high quality archiving), the most important, differentiating aspect is that **content is processed into a central format for high-quality and easy re-use in all kinds of digital products**. The COMYAN

ePaper is simply an example of that: All our ePaper products are created fully automatically and in high visual quality from this backbone. The use of the data in the COMYAN „Content Backbone" is not limited to COMYAN products - any other system or digital product can make use of this via open interfaces (several of our clients are actively doing this).

What is the most important technical aspect of such a system?

The key to a working backbone are the **integration capabilities** and **the ability to transform native content formats** from the various proprietary production systems into a **neutral central exchange format**, while at the same time preserving all formatting, semantics and meta-data.

NewsBench is our unique framework that COMYAN developed over a period of two decades and that has been successfully integrated with already seventeen different editorial systems.

What is the most important user aspect of such a system?

The most important aspects from a user's point of view are **ease of use** (integration should be as transparent as possible), the **completeness of the data** (the Backbone should really contain everything, like images, graphics, agencies, articles, pages, audio and video), the **quality of the data** (articles must include formatting and not just text, and they must be translated correctly in all parts), and the **depth of integration with all the user's apps** (like enabling drag&drop of images from the backbone directly into a layout application).

Why do you not just federate searches to other systems?

Federated search has been a „light-weight" integration strategy for some vendors, as it is very easy to implement. In this case, a user's search is sent to the different built-in search engines various production systems one by one, and results can be shown in a central user interface. However, due to the different data formats, meta data, and search engines built into the various systems it is near impossible to aggregate search results in a single result list or display documents homogeneously. It is also not possible to connect (relate) data across different systems as there is no central database.

Why do you copy all data into your database / your system?

In contrast, when data is copied into the central system, it will also be transformed into a common format, and all searches will be true searches within a single data base. **Format, meta data and all others aspects of the data will be unified.** This is technically more difficult to implement, but enables a much more luxurious way of working with data from different sources - all articles, for instance, will look and behave identically in the user interface, independent of which source system they were imported from. Digital editions, such as ePapers, can be created automatically, no matter which system the data originally came from (this is being used for mixed productions very successfully).

What are you doing with live data - such as articles in production?

For real time data - such as articles that are still being worked on before they are published in a newspaper - COMYAN offers **real-time mirroring**. This has been successfully in operation at our clients for several years now, linking print and online production in real time.

Why is it so important to process editorial system data in high quality?

Because **all re-use will depend on it** and **it is really a challenge for all publishers** (in our experience). Data stored in print editorial systems is still very print-oriented, no matter which vendor. To make it truly re-usable in digital channels

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requires some sophisticated processing. **It also should be done only once, for all channels**, and the resulting vendor-neutral and media-neutral format needs to be stored in a neutral database, which is of course also the archive.

What is COMYAN doing differently from other companies here?

We have developed integrations with already 17 vendors, learned their native data formats (similar to learning 17 different languages) and successfully translated them into the same neutral format/language - all over a period of more than twenty years. This expertise and this framework (NewsBench) sets COMYAN apart probably more than anything else.

What data are you storing in the Backbone?

We currently store images, graphics, agency text, articles, pages, editions, audio and video.

How can other applications access data in the Backbone?

Other applications (such as editorial systems or web portals) can directly access the search engine and all media using COMYANs RESTful Web API - a **web service interface** that is particularly easy to implement. Using this interface, several vendors implemented Drag&Drop interfaces with us, enabling direct dragging of images from our browser into their layout, for example.

How can editors access the Backbone?

COMYANs main user interface is a powerful and flexible web user interface that runs in practically all browsers. COMYAN has been developing it since 1996 in several generations, in close collaboration with our users.

How much will it cost to integrate our editorial system?

To integrate an editorial system for content sharing, archiving and ePaper (all coming from the same neutral data) costs about 5.000 to 10.000 EUR for a system that is already on our integration list and about twice as much for a new system.

Why are you doing both Media Asset Management and ePaper?

Both Media Asset Management / archiving / content re-use and ePaper **depend on high quality, vendor-neutral editorial system data**. This is actually how we started - by finding out that both tasks can be solved very elegantly with the same content processing engine, creating lots of synergies.

How can the Backbone be used to create new digital editions?

For any digital edition that is not identical to the newspaper, a production system - such as a Web-CMS or a service provider - will always be used. Those systems depend on high quality data from print editorial, and this is exactly what the **backbone provides to them**.

How big can the Backbone get?

Our currently largest system successfully stores and searches about **29 Million objects** (images, graphics, agency texts, articles and pages). Our currently largest installation user base is about 1400 users, of which about half are using the system concurrently. Every year the amount of data is growing further.

What are the editorial systems / CMS systems you already integrate with?

Alfa, ATEX/Hermes, ATEX/Prestige, CCI (new!), DIG, InDesign, Multicom NGen, NewsNT, PPI, QPS, Quark XPress, RedWeb, Vjoon K4

Legacy: ATEX/PDP-11, Cardo, Harris, Siemens/Cosy, TRIP, DC-3 and other legacy archives.

New editorial systems can be typically integrated within short time and very reasonable investment.

Is your „Backbone" a „CMS"?

The acronym „CMS" is used for many different things, as about any system with a database in the editorial workflow might be justly called a „Content Management System" - like a print editorial system, a web content management system, a media asset management system, an archive,…

The „Comyan Media System" is a system that, in contrast to production systems, is a „read only" system that is **not used for editing**, but for **aggregating, normalizing, exchanging and distributing content between all these production systems** from different vendors.