Top 7 Reasons You Need to Upgrade to Sitecore 9 This Year

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Maybe you couldn't justify the expense. Maybe you couldn't get consensus. Maybe you're on a highly-customized code base. Whatever the reason, you've decided to hold off on upgrading, and you're still running an older version of Sitecore.

Here's the thing. **No matter what version you're on, and no matter how long it's been, there's never been a better time to upgrade to Sitecore 9.**

And here's why: as of 2020, Sitecore no longer provides any kind of support for sites running any version of 6 or 7. In 2021, you will no longer get security updates or assistance with production incidents for 8.0 and 8.1. In 2022, this kind of support ends for 8.2.

What does that mean for you? In short, if you choose not to upgrade, it means that you're putting your website, your company, and your job in a pretty precarious position. When you put off upgrading, it's only a matter of time before something breaks and your site goes down. If you're sitting on an unsupported version of Sitecore, you may just find yourself up the creek without a paddle.

That said, with the release of Sitecore 9 there are plenty of new features and benefits that should make it easy for you to build a case, get buy-in, and secure budget for your upgrade.

Here are a few, just to get the conversation started.

7 benefits of upgrading to Sitecore 9

If you've been putting off a [Sitecore upgrade](link), here are seven reasons why you shouldn't delay making the move to Sitecore 9 any longer.
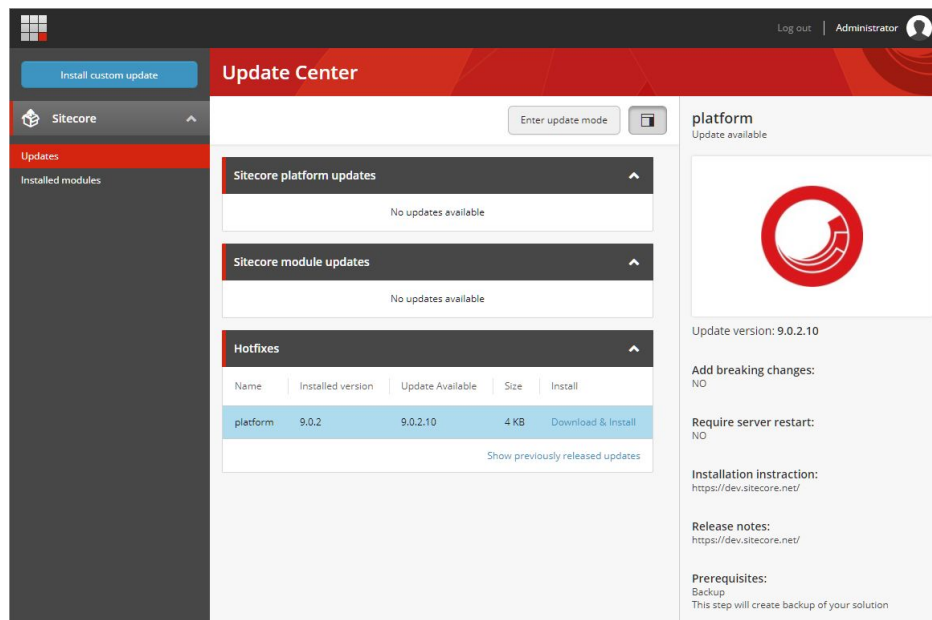
1. Upgrades have never been easier or cheaper

We've seen a lot of Sitecore clients who put off upgrades because, quite honestly, they just don't feel like taking on such a project.

We get it. Planning a Sitecore upgrade takes time, budget, and it's not as sexy as the other big marketing initiatives you've got in the hopper. But, keeping your Sitecore environment in sync with the current version is essential to ensuring those marketing initiatives can actually happen—rather than getting sidetracked by surprise downtime or unsupported functionality.

Fortunately, Sitecore's seriously updated the upgrade process so it's never been easier. (It's not quite sexy yet, but it's definitely a lot more attractive!) Now you can say goodbye to incremental upgrades (if you're already on Sitecore 8). That's right; no more going from 8.0 to 8.1, 8.1 to 8.2, and so on. Now, you upgrade directly to Sitecore 9 from the entire 8 series—literally shaving days off your upgrade process.

And that's not all. There are even more changes in Sitecore 9 that make upgrading headache-free. The new Update Wizard is more reliable and works faster than ever. There's also the new Sitecore Update Center, which offers hotfixes, platform, and module updates for you to quickly find, download, and install:

With the new Sitecore Install Framework (SIF) and Sitecore Install Assistant (SIA), installing new Sitecore environments is substantially streamlined and simplified. This can help reduce the amount of time and risk involved in spinning up a new environment. Gone are the days of manually unzipping packages, editing configuration files, and installing databases by hand. Now, with SIF and SIA, these steps are all automated, allowing developers to get to work installing the newly updated codebase.

With these new features and simplified configuration, upgrading from Sitecore 8 to 9 can be done in a fraction of the time.

2. Sitecore 9 is optimized for the cloud

Azure PaaS has been available through the Sitecore Azure Toolkit since 8.2 Update 1, but with 9.0, there's now more integrated support for it. That means it's easier to run your environment on Azure PaaS, and easier to leverage Sitecore's expertise if you run into an issue.

If you haven't made the move from a physical environment to a cloud-based one, consider this your moment to press go. Here are just a few of the benefits you'll enjoy from hosting Sitecore on Azure PaaS:

- 10X faster setup than that required for physical environments

- Ability to scale resources automatically and in real-time

- Reduced risk with blue/green deployments

- No more Windows Updates!

Starting with version 9.1, Sitecore also offers expanded support for Federated SSO Authentication. No longer are you limited to Sitecore's database as your only option for authentication. Now, you (and your customers) can sign in using a number of trusted services, including Microsoft Office Online and Office 365, Azure Active Directory, Google G Suite, and social logins. This is a big win for enterprise clients concerned about compliance and security (and their internal IT teams who have to manage everything).

3. Build and deploy new environments more efficiently

Sitecore 9 started moving towards a microservice architecture. As a result, a higher number of services are required, and there are more configuration restrictions to consider.

One might reasonably think that this increases the complexity of deploying a new environment. You'd be right, if it weren't for Azure PaaS.

Now that Sitecore is optimized for the cloud, you can enjoy the power of a more complex environment, without the comparable hassle of planning, configuring, installing, and deploying it. With Azure PaaS, Sitecore takes care of the planning and configuration piece, leaving you to simply install and deploy. And it really is simple; you just select the size of your environment and the Wizard handles it from there.

4. Support for headless JavaScript

If you've kept up with technology news in recent years, no doubt you've heard of headless. Well, you'll be happy to hear that Sitecore XP 9.1 introduces headless JavaScript into Sitecore with Sitecore JavaScript Services (JSS).

Still in its early stages, this bleeding-edge technology enables JavaScript pros to develop and deploy connected and disconnected experiences—faster and without .NET expertise.

Sitecore JavaScript Services (JSS) also supports the platform's powerful personalization functionalities, enabling personalized data to be gathered both online and offline for true omnichannel personalization.

5. Smarter forms for improved data capture

Speaking of omnichannel data integration, that data has to come from somewhere. Sure, you have your existing data, your CRM, and your partner APIs. But when it comes to capturing that juicy new customer data, you've got to have the right forms.

Sitecore 9 replaces Web Forms for Marketers with Sitecore Forms, featuring a fully redesigned, intuitive drag-and-drop interface that's easier to use.

Plus, Sitecore Forms are totally reusable and re-skinnable, so your team can quickly replicate them across campaigns, devices, and different brand sites—speeding up your time to market. With better forms, it's easier to create lead generation and nurture campaigns that incorporate personalization, customized fields, and conditional form logic.

6. Multisystem integration powers 360° view of customer data

Sitecore XP 9 also heralds the introduction of Sitecore xConnect™. xConnect ™ allows data interchange between Sitecore XP and your other systems of record, such as your CRM, PIM, ERP, and more. These APIs supercharge Sitecore's already potent personalization capabilities, connecting the dots between a customer's interactions with your website, application, call center, sales team, and IoT devices. Finally, you have a real-time, 360-degree view of each customer's journey.

There's even more good news. Before Sitecore 9, you had one choice for your xDB database: MongoDB. Well, times are a-changing. You now have the ability to store your xDB data in Microsoft SQL Server or Microsoft Azure SQL.

7. Rest easy with built-in GDPR compliance

The mid-2018 implementation of GDPR was a scary time for businesses (or at least the ones who served European customers). If you were caught up in it, you remember. Suddenly, everyone had to drop what they were working on and rush to ensure their site was fully GDPR-compliant, or they'd risk getting sued by the EU.

In that rush, it's likely your team missed a few steps. Or, it's possible you chose to be thrill-seekers and willfully didn't fully implement GDPR. Either way, Sitecore just made it a whole lot easier for your company to be fully compliant.

Thanks to its privacy-by-design approach, Sitecore 9 now comes with GDPR-compliance features built-in to xConnect/xDB. These include support for anonymizing data, and the ability to annotate data and treat it as sensitive, depending on your needs and your configuration choices.

Ready to move to Sitecore 9?

The first thing to consider when planning a Sitecore "upgrade", is that you have to do so sequentially. You can't just upgrade from Sitecore 6 to 9 or Sitecore 7 to 9. So if you're on version 6.4– you've got to upgrade to version 6.5, then 6.6– and so on. It's a long road to 9, with lots of testing and bug fixing along the way.

An alternative is to "**migrate" directly to Sitecore 9.** You simply stand up a new instance. Start with a clean codebase that is designed for 9 and follows [Sitecore Helix principles](#) and modern development best practices. Then migrate your content. It gives you a chance to refresh your site and allows you to shed all that technical debt, in one fell swoop.

If you're looking for the [most cost effective way to move to Sitecore 9](#), forget about "upgrading" and start talking about "migrating".

If you'd like to talk more about what that process looks like for your site, [contact Engagency](#).