

From Traditional AEM to Modern Headless - Without Disrupting Authors

October 13, 2026



Customer Success | Digital Experiences

This session is being recorded.

Keep an eye out for a follow-up email after the event (from csatscale@adobe.com) with a summary and links to the recording, slide deck, and more.

Agenda

Hosted in partnership with AEM Champion, Daniel Strmečki, this session will showcase how organizations can move from traditional AEM delivery to a modern headless architecture without disrupting authors or replacing the content operations already established in AEM Sites.

Using AEM as a Cloud Service, Universal Editor, and Next.js, authors retain familiar capabilities such as visual editing, in-context preview, page management, workflows, translations, and multi-market content structures. Development teams gain the freedom to build, deploy, and optimize the frontend independently.

Start Time	8:00 a.m. PT/9:00 a.m. ET
5 minutes	Welcome & Introductions
30 minutes	AEM Use Case
20 minutes	Q&A
5 minutes	Survey, Upcoming Events
End Time	9:00 a.m. PT/12:00 p.m. ET

Today's Presenter

Daniel Strmečki

Founder, Meticulous Digital
AEM Champion



Adobe

About me

- Personal
 - Married, father of two girls
 - Love watching and playing football
- Work
 - 10+ years in enterprise AEM and headless DXP
 - Founder & Solution Architect at Meticulous Digital
- Recognition
 - PhD in Computer Science
 - 3x AEM Champion 2024-2027
 - 4x Adobe SME, Adobe Community Advisor



For more practical insights
on modern AEM, headless
architecture, and enterprise
delivery, visit my blog at
<https://meticulous.digital>



Agenda

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- 1) How Universal Editor Enables Next-Gen Headless
 - 2) Setting the goals for the Live Demo
 - 3) Demo part 1: Editorial Experience with Universal Editor
 - 4) Demo part 2: User Experience with Decoupled Frontend
 - 5) Technical Architecture
 - 6) Developer Experience
 - 7) Key Takeaways
 - 8) Questions? Let's discuss!
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The Old Headless Paradigm

- Content Fragments as the primary way to manage structured content
- AEM Sites pages and components not used
- Content delivered through GraphQL APIs
- Frontend fully responsible for page composition and rendering
- No WYSIWYG editing or in-context page preview

Name
John Doe ✓

Job title
Test ✓

Description

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Author

Statistics Compare

- **Universal Editor enables teams to keep the strength of AEM Sites while delivering through a modern, decoupled frontend.**

Where AEM Sites Meets Modern Headless

EDS

TOP PERFORMANCE

Static/incremental site generation for top website performance, UX, and SEO.

EDITING EXPERIENCE

AEM Sites with Universal Editor enabling WYSIWYG editing with in-context preview.

DEVELOPER EXPERIENCE

Start of the art frontend framework like Next.js ideal for complex design systems.

FLEXIBLE ARCHITECTURE

Avoid vendor lock-in, integrate anything and choose the best tools for each layer.

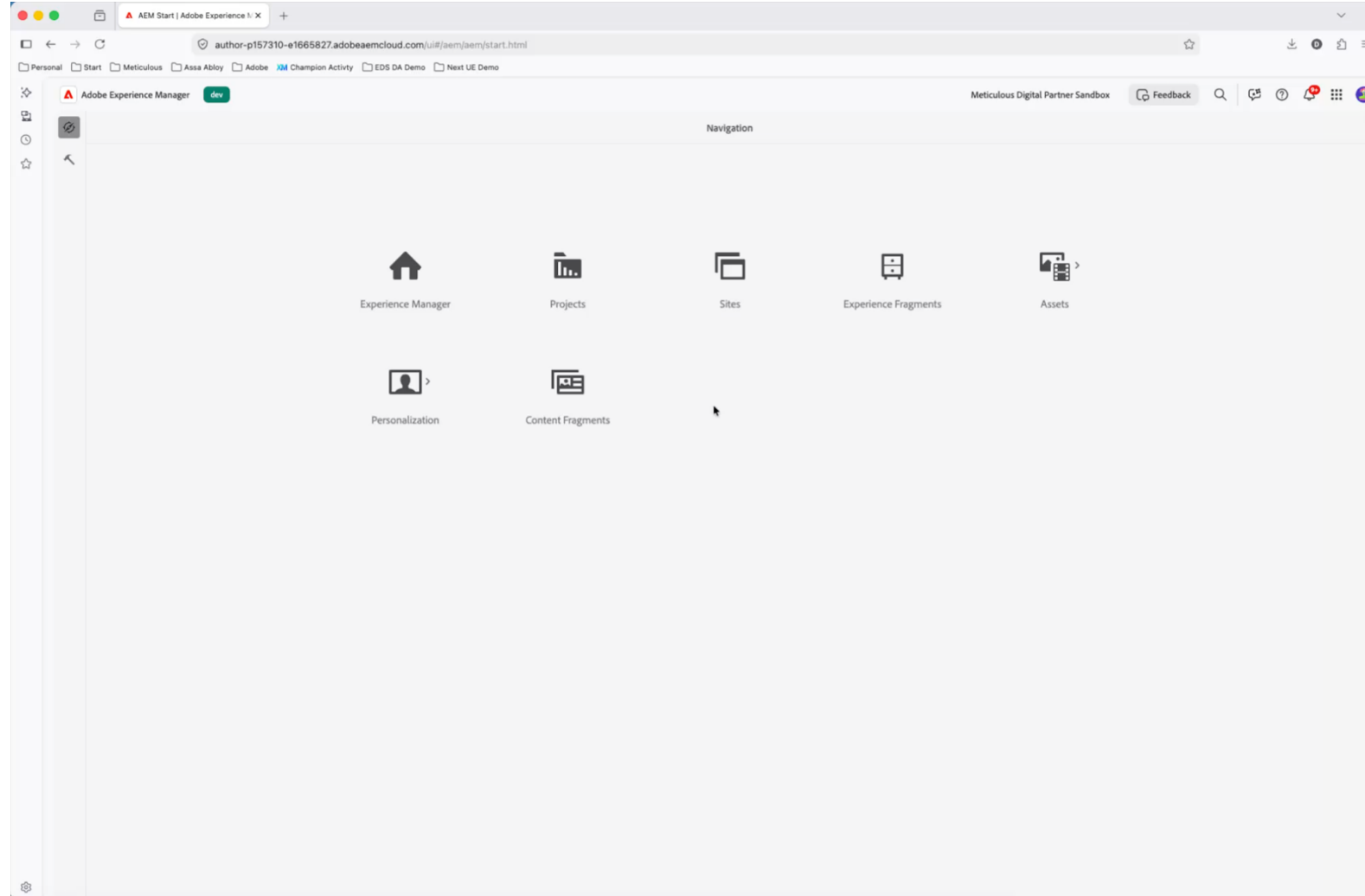
Next.js



Editor perspective

With Universal Editor

Editor perspective demo

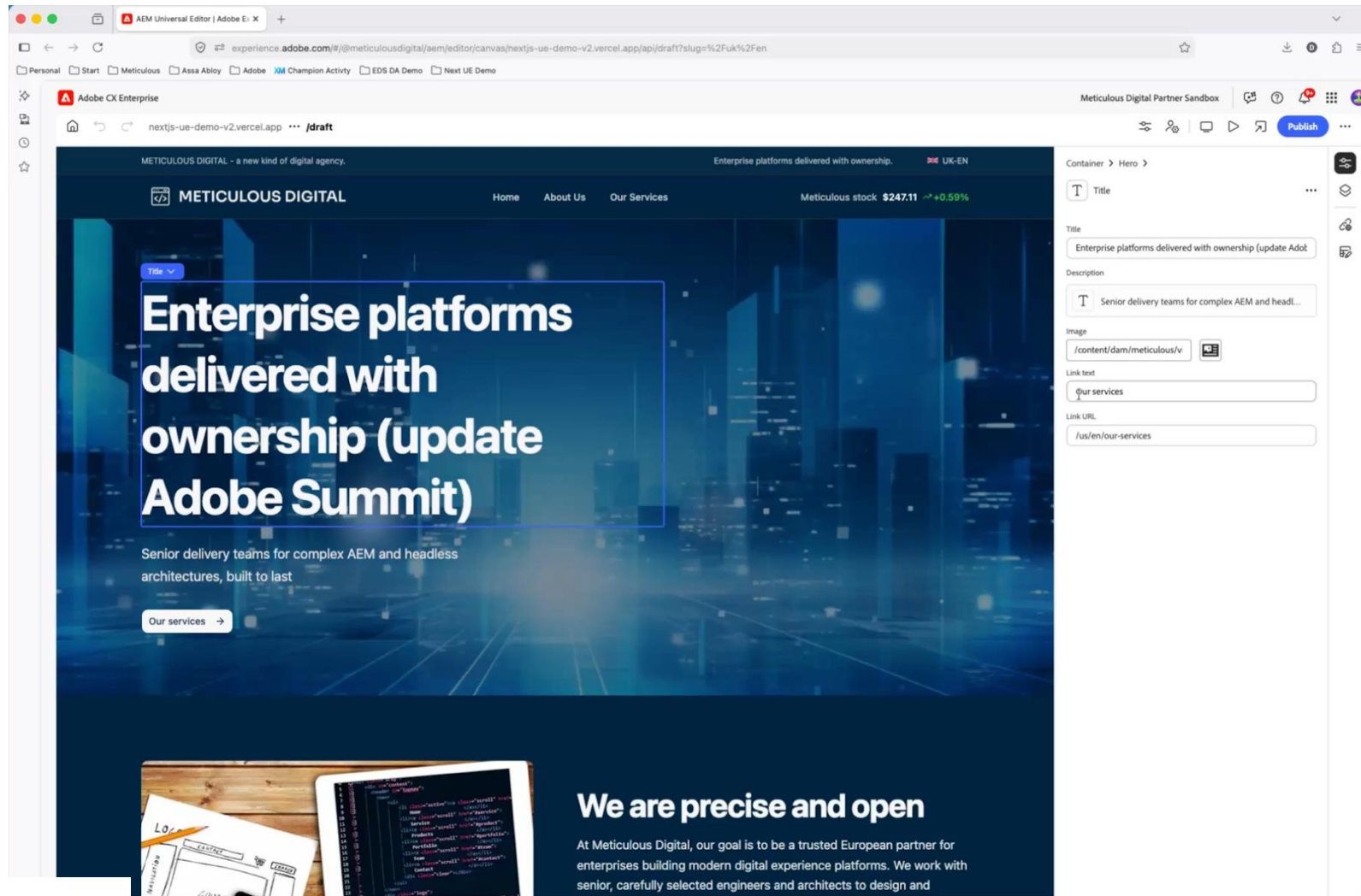




User perspective

With SSG/ISG

User perspective demo



Try live demo
running on Vercel



Technical Architecture

Headless & decoupled

AEM Sites as CMS, Frontend as Delivery Layer

Choose the best tool for the layer!

Vercel



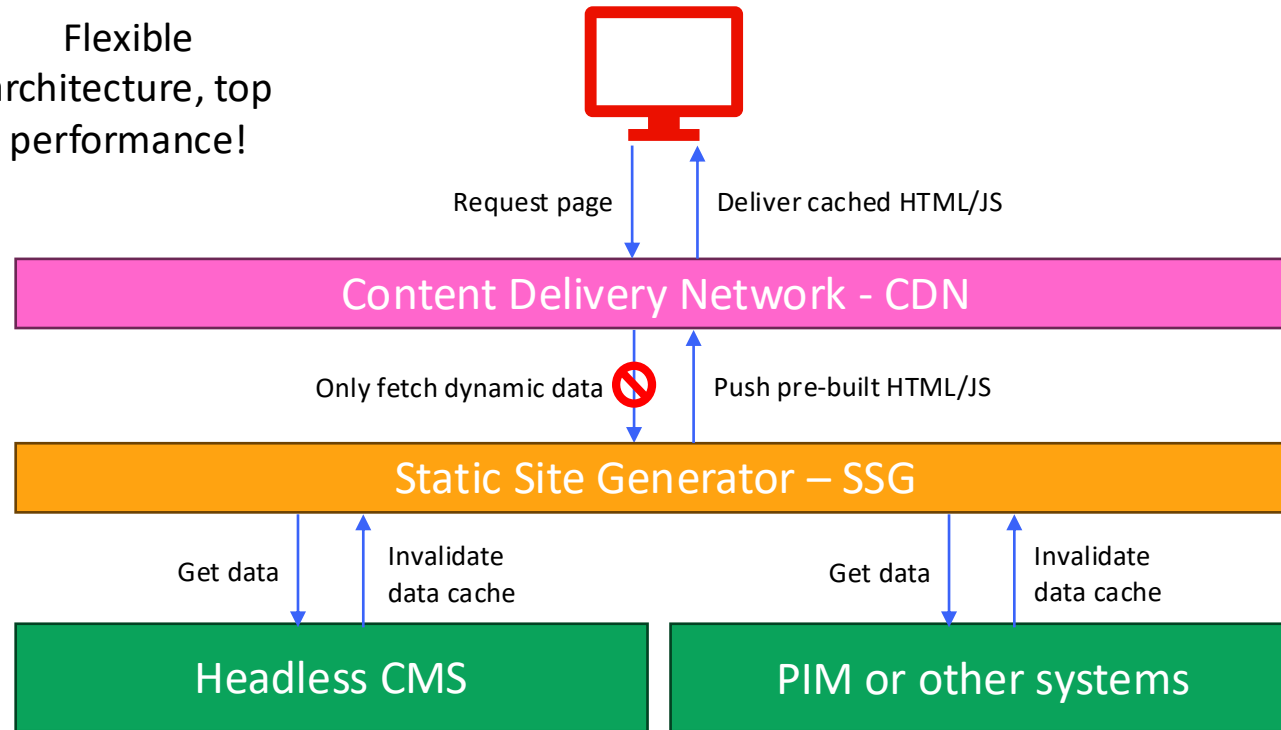
Next.js



AEM



Flexible architecture, top performance!



We keep AEM Sites focused on enterprise content operations.

The frontend takes ownership of modern delivery, performance, SEO, and UX.

Why Universal Editor Is the Future?

- Adobe's strategic direction for visual authoring, eventually replacing Page Editor and SPA Editor
- Editor-as-a-Service, decoupled from AEM and independent of the frontend technology
- WYSIWYG editing for headless and hybrid architectures
- Supports AEM Sites, Content Fragments, and document-based authoring
- Works with any frontend framework, including Next.js and Edge Delivery Services (EDS)
- HTML-based instrumentation for simple integration with existing frontends
- Extensible through Adobe I/O plugins and custom integrations



Developer Experience

Modern Frontend Development

Instrumenting any Frontend App for Universal Editor

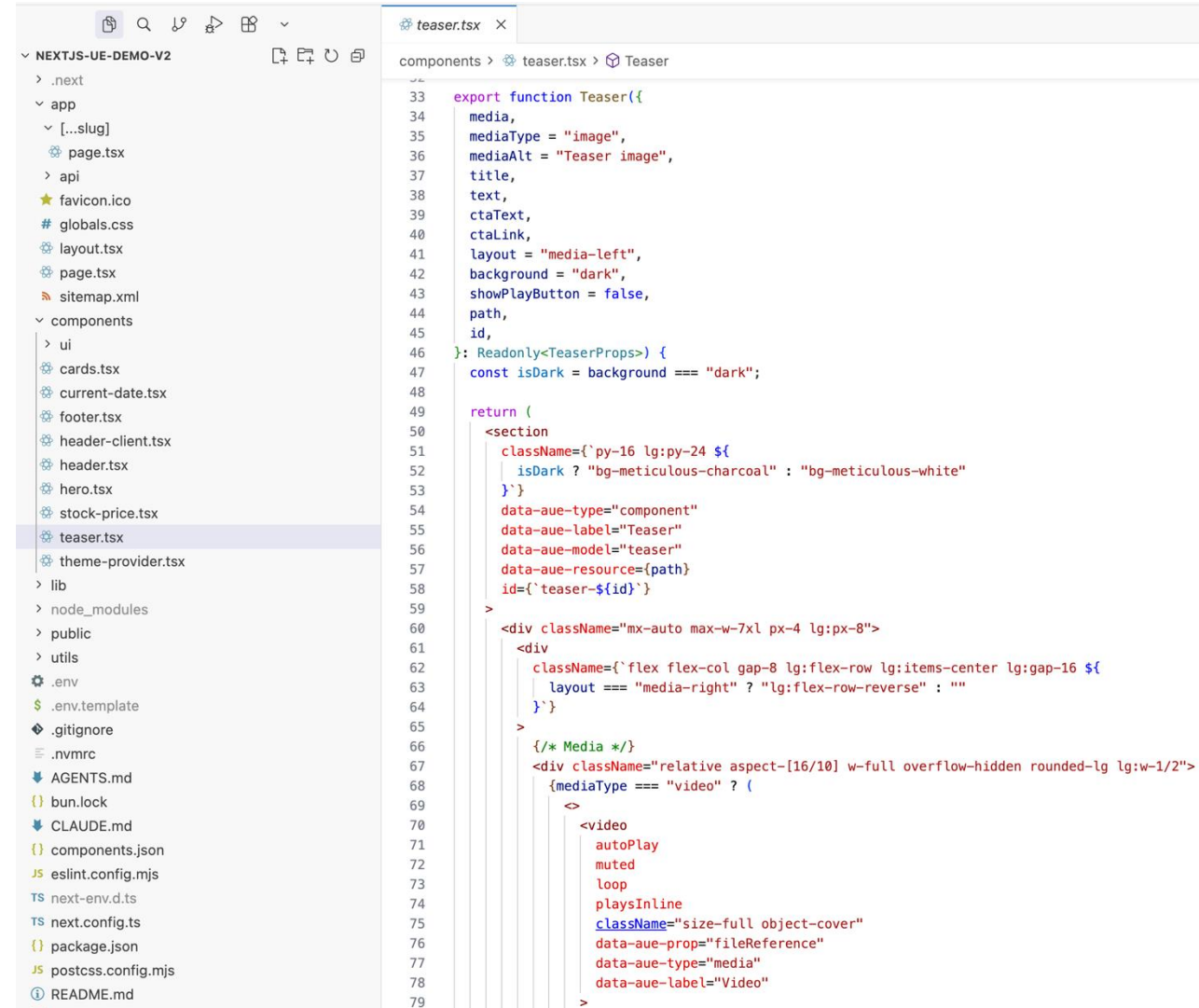
- Implement author/draft mode to fetch content from AEM Author instead of Publish
- Include the Universal Editor JavaScript library (cors.js)
- Configure the Universal Editor connection using HTML metadata
- Instrument components and editable fields using data-aue-* attributes
- Define component models and definitions for property editing and component insertion



Adobe's Official Guide for
Developers starting with
the Universal Editor

Why Developers Like Next.js?

- Build components in a modern React and TypeScript frontend stack
- Use server-side (preferred) and client-side rendering where each makes sense
- Get built-in caching, revalidation, image optimization, and strong Core Web Vitals
- Run on Vercel or independently on AWS/Azure and integrate with any CDN
- Use the broader frontend ecosystem: Tailwind, Storybook, design systems...



```
teaser.tsx
components > teaser.tsx > Teaser

33 export function Teaser({
34   media,
35   mediaType = "image",
36   mediaAlt = "Teaser image",
37   title,
38   text,
39   ctaText,
40   ctaLink,
41   layout = "media-left",
42   background = "dark",
43   showPlayButton = false,
44   path,
45   id,
46 }: Readonly<TeaserProps>) {
47   const isDark = background === "dark";
48
49   return (
50     <section
51       className={`py-16 lg:py-24 ${
52         isDark ? "bg-meticulous-charcoal" : "bg-meticulous-white"
53       }`}
54       data-aue-type="component"
55       data-aue-label="Teaser"
56       data-aue-model="teaser"
57       data-aue-resource={path}
58       id={`teaser-${id}`}
59     >
60       <div className="mx-auto max-w-7xl px-4 lg:px-8">
61         <div
62           className={`flex flex-col gap-8 lg:flex-row lg:items-center lg:gap-16 ${
63             layout === "media-right" ? "lg:flex-row-reverse" : ""
64           }`}
65         >
66           {/* Media */}
67           <div className="relative aspect-[16/10] w-full overflow-hidden rounded-lg lg:w-1/2">
68             {mediaType === "video" ? (
69               <>
70                 <video
71                   autoPlay
72                   muted
73                   loop
74                   playsInline
75                   className="size-full object-cover"
76                   data-aue-prop="fileReference"
77                   data-aue-type="media"
78                   data-aue-label="Video"
79                 />

```

Key Takeaways

- Headless AEM no longer means choosing between flexible architecture and authoring experience
- Universal Editor brings visual Sites authoring into modern decoupled delivery
- Keep AEM focused on content operations, not as the central hub for all business logic, integrations, and delivery concerns
- SSG/ISG and the edge layer can deliver the speed, SEO, and flexibility modern enterprise platforms expect



Adobe's Official Guide for
Getting Started with the
Universal Editor

Questions? Let's discuss!

daniel@meticulous.digital

Adobe



Event Feedback

Before you go, please take less than a minute to share your (anonymous) feedback on today's event via [this short survey](#).

Welcome AEM Champions!

The 2026-2027 class of Adobe Experience Manager Champions was announced earlier today, so sending a huge congratulations to everyone who was selected!

Keep an eye out for future AEM events hosted by your peers and Champions.

[See the full list here.](#)



Upcoming AEM Champion Event



AI in AEM: From Intelligent Content to Agentic Experiences

Explore how AI is transforming Adobe Experience Manager - from accelerating content creation and optimization to enabling intelligent, agent-driven workflows. Hosted in partnership with AEM Champion, Deepak Khetawat, this session covers practical AI use cases in AEM, Adobe's AI capabilities, and how AEM agents automate tasks, orchestrate workflows, and help teams deliver faster, more personalized digital experiences.

- [RESCHEDULED] December 17 at 8:00 a.m. PT / 11:00 a.m. ET
~~October 29 at 8:00 a.m. PT / 11:00 a.m. ET~~
- AEM Champion: Deepak Khetawat, Palo Alto Network
- [Register here](#)

