
MANDOGROUP
Making the Move.
Migration Without the Mayhem.
A Practical Guide for a Seamless Transition from Sitecore to Optimizely.

Introduction.

Migrating away from a Digital Experience Platform (DXP) like Sitecore Experience Platform is a major strategic decision - one that often comes with hesitation. IT and Marketing leaders rightly worry about the complexity involved: potential downtime, risk of data loss, spiralling costs, the sense of unknown around what you're moving to, and of course, the business disruption that can come with a poorly managed migration.

For many UK utilities companies, especially in the water sector, the pressure to modernise digital experiences - while balancing tight budgets, regulatory scrutiny, and customer trust - is intensifying. The March 2025 Ofwat consumer satisfaction reports and ongoing stormwater-related service challenges have reinforced how essential responsive, reliable digital services are for both customers and regulators.

The good news? Migration doesn't have to be painful. With proper planning, governance, and the right delivery partner, you can make a structured, low-risk, and future-proof transition to a more agile platform like Optimizely.

This guide outlines what can go wrong, why it happens, and how to strategically de-risk your migration project with specific relevance to water utilities managing legacy platforms and legacy expectations.

Why Migrate from Sitecore?

Many organisations who have used Sitecore successfully for years now find themselves at a crossroads. For utilities providers, this often comes to a head when customer experience must evolve rapidly, but the platform resists change. Recent regional flooding and pipe failure incidents have shown how quickly digital services need to scale under pressure - sending out updates, pausing planned work, rerouting service messages - all with limited notice.

With Sitecore, that level of agility can be difficult. Here's why water companies are re-evaluating their platforms:

- **Monolithic Architecture:** Sitecore's structure doesn't easily support composable or modular approaches. For water companies that need to integrate real-time alerts, outage notifications, or geolocation services, this can become a real bottleneck.

- **Licensing & Infrastructure Costs:** Sitecore's licensing model, especially when run on-prem, leads to significant operational overhead, including the need to maintain multiple environments. In a cost-conscious sector like utilities, this can divert funds from more critical transformation initiatives.

- **Developer Dependency:** Many water utilities are focused on empowering customer service and communications teams to manage updates themselves. But Sitecore still requires technical input for personalisation, UX changes, and content experimentation - slowing down the business.

- **Upgrade Headaches:** The complexity of upgrading to Sitecore XM Cloud (which many UK utilities have not yet done) can seem unjustifiable when the tangible benefits for regulated service businesses remain unclear.

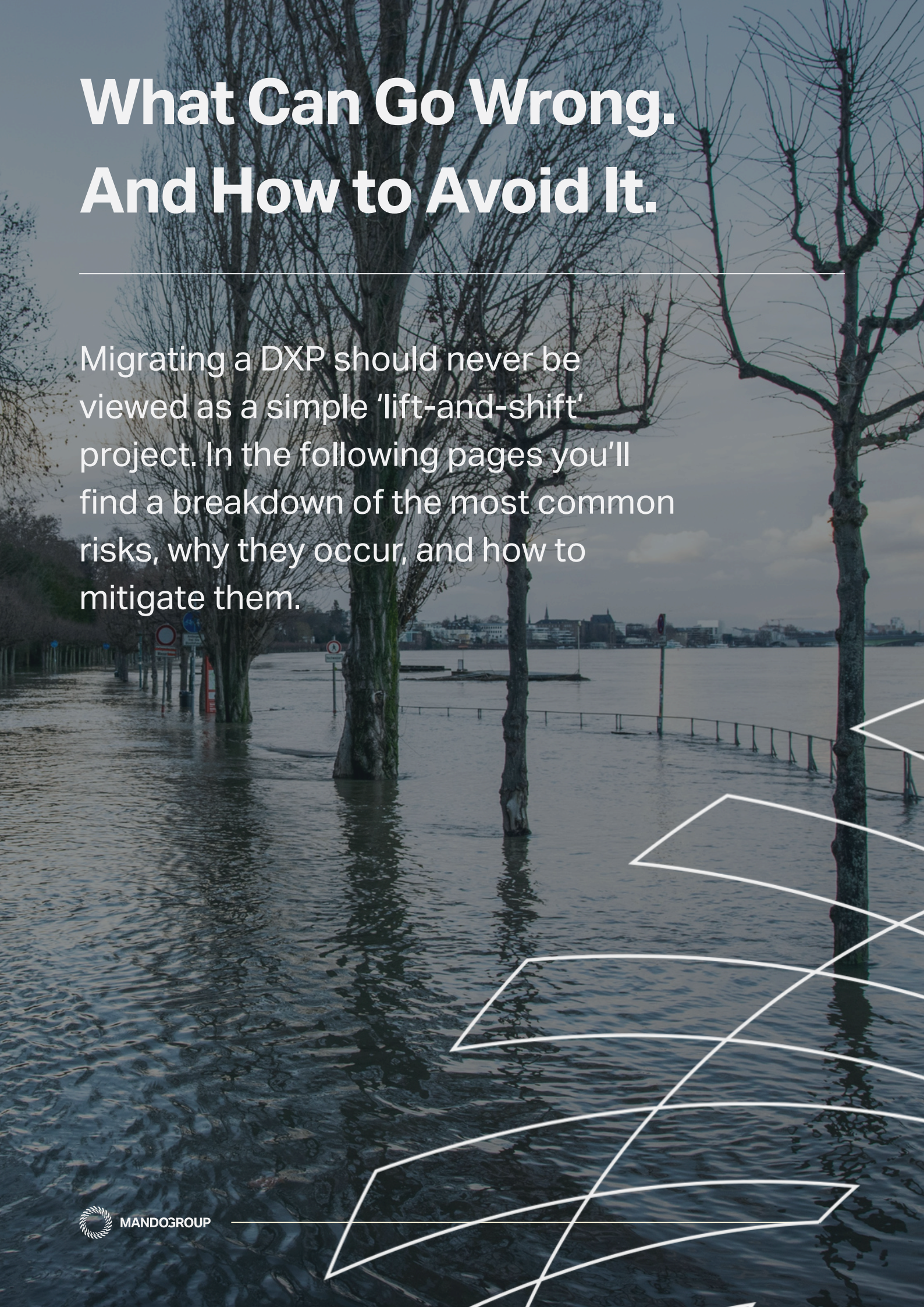
Why Optimizely?

Optimizely is frequently chosen as the modern alternative especially for regulated industries because it provides:

- A composable, API-first architecture supporting modular content and feature delivery.
- Intuitive editor experience that enables fast onboarding and decentralised content management.
- Inbuilt AI and experimentation features that allow continuous improvement without full rebuilds.
- A cloud-native setup with fewer moving parts, reducing infrastructure demands on IT teams.

What Can Go Wrong. And How to Avoid It.

Migrating a DXP should never be viewed as a simple ‘lift-and-shift’ project. In the following pages you’ll find a breakdown of the most common risks, why they occur, and how to mitigate them.



Downtime That Impacts Service Continuity.

1

Why it happens:

Unplanned downtime during cutover can severely disrupt customer service - especially during periods of high demand such as planned maintenance alerts or weather-related surges.

Mitigation strategies:

- **Parallel environments:** Run Sitecore and Optimizely side by side to test the new platform without disrupting BAU.
- **Staged rollouts:** Introduce new features or pages gradually to reduce risk.
- **Disaster recovery plans:** Ensure you can revert quickly in the event of unexpected issues.

Following Storm Kathleen in early March 2025, many water providers faced surges in digital traffic, especially from customers seeking outage and flooding information. We've seen first-hand how vital it is that digital migrations don't impact service reliability during these types of incidents. Mapping operational calendar risks like flood season, leak alerts, or planned upgrade works is essential.

Data Loss or Content Inconsistency.

2

Why it happens:

Poor content mapping or reliance on manual processes can lead to the loss of critical documents like water quality reports, asset performance summaries, or historical alerts.

Mitigation strategies:

- **Comprehensive audit:** Prioritise high-value pages such as service maps, outage updates, and compliance content.
- **Automated migration:** Avoid human error and streamline the transfer of structured content.
- **Live collaboration tooling:** Ditch spreadsheets and use shared platforms for real-time progress and audit trails.

In our work with utilities clients, the challenge often isn't the quantity of content - it's the regulatory weight it carries. Every link needs to work. Every PDF needs to be accessible. Every page needs to load quickly for mobile users in rural areas. A meticulous content strategy is critical.

Integration Breakage.

3

Why it happens:

Sitecore implementations tend to be tightly coupled to back-office systems like GIS, CRM (e.g., Microsoft Dynamics), and customer portals.

Mitigation strategies:

- **Inventory & dependency mapping:** Understand which systems drive real-time updates or customer account data.
- **Refactor smartly:** Take the opportunity to modernise old integrations - many UK water companies are replacing middleware now anyway.
- **Test integrations before go-live:** Simulate storm reports or burst pipe alerts to stress test new systems.

The increased scrutiny around incident reporting and real-time communication, particularly after the Ofwat February 2025 directive on proactive customer communication, makes integration robustness more critical than ever. A failed integration isn't just a missed update, it can become a headline.

Cost Overruns and Timeline Slippage.

4

Why it happens:

Scope creep and edge-case complexities in legacy systems are common. In utilities, customer-facing systems often rely on legacy data that's only surfaced at migration time.

Mitigation strategies:

- **Discovery phase:** Engage both IT and regulatory teams early to anticipate compliance needs.
- **MVP-first delivery:** Prioritise essential public information like outage notifications, water quality dashboards, and customer FAQs before layering on enhancements.
- **Milestone-based budgets:** Prevent runaway costs while allowing flexibility for unexpected findings.

We've worked with utilities where teams were surprised by the level of manual patching done over years to meet SLA reporting needs. Uncovering this early avoids last-minute fire-fighting.

Internal Team Frustration or Change Resistance.

5

Why it happens:

If your communications, CSR, or regulatory teams feel sidelined or overwhelmed by a shift in platforms, engagement will suffer.

Mitigation strategies:

- **Early access:** Let non-technical users play with Optimizely before launch.
- **Cross-functional champions:** Involve operational teams who rely on digital tools daily (e.g., outage comms, customer service).
- **Tailored training:** Create user guides specific to your internal workflows (incident response, customer updates, regulatory publishing).

It's not uncommon for water companies to have distributed teams across regions managing localised content. Ensuring those editors understand and feel comfortable with the new tools is just as important as the tech. Optimizely's editor experience often wins these teams over quickly - but only if onboarding is made relevant to their day jobs.

Step-by-Step Guide to a Smooth Migration.

1

Migration Readiness Assessment

- Review current Sitecore architecture, licensing, and usage patterns.
- Highlight known pain points (e.g., managing flood alerts or publishing outage maps).
- Define what success means - speed of update? Reduced costs? Better control?

2

Content & Data Audit

- Inventory templates, media, forms, and regulatory content.
- Archive outdated material; migrate only what's valuable.
- Identify content requiring accessibility improvements under current regulations.

3

Technical Architecture Design

- Plan how integrations with CRM, asset systems, or real-time APIs will work.
- Determine headless vs. hybrid approach based on flexibility needs.

4

Migration Execution

- Script the transfer of structured content.
- Rebuild navigation, search, and campaign logic.
- Test on key customer journeys - especially mobile and accessibility compliance.

5

Testing & Validation

- Verify performance, form functionality, and regulatory page compliance.
- UAT should include CSR teams, operational leads, and communications.

6

Go-Live Planning & Cutover

- Avoid known peaks like post-storm updates or seasonal campaigns.
- Use DNS switching for a controlled launch.
- Monitor key pages: Outages, contact, service updates.

7

Post-Launch Optimisation

- Use A/B testing to refine journeys (e.g., self-service flows).
- Roll out enhancements based on real user data.
- Train teams on how to use Optimizely's campaign and experimentation tools.

Final Thoughts.

A Sitecore to Optimizely migration is your opportunity to build a future-proof digital foundation. One that's flexible, faster, and tailored to the evolving needs of water customers and regulators alike.

Done right, it's not just a technology shift. It's a chance to rethink how you deliver timely, trustworthy service updates, empower internal teams, and build digital trust in a regulated landscape.

The key is not just moving fast, but moving smart.

Andy Pimlett – Product Director

With over 20 years of experience in website design and development, Andy is involved in all stages of project delivery - from discovery through design and build - ensuring our team delivers accessible, high-performing, responsive, and compelling digital experiences. Andy plays a key role in shaping our product-oriented engagement approach, with responsibility for applying best practices in product ownership and agile delivery.

Next Steps.

Contact us today. We'll assess feasibility, surface hidden risks, and provide a migration roadmap aligned with your operational and compliance needs.

Get in Touch.

Call us

08453654040

Email

hello@mandogroup.com

Website

www.mandogroup.com

2024 PLATINUM Solution Partner Optimizely

Certified B Corporation