

Case Study: Building the NEXXT Tech Stack, A CTO's Perspective

A CTO's Perspective on Launching Fast, Staying Flexible, and Practicing What We Preach

The Starting Point

NEXXT didn't emerge from a single "lightbulb moment" but from a growing sense of industry urgency. At ISE 2025, during an AI Executive Think Tank NEXXT Founder and Chief Transformation Officer Byron Tarry convened, leading voices from the AV and Collaboration world made it clear: our industry lacked a clear, actionable, and relevant pathway forward in the AI era. That conversation crystallized the need for NEXXT — not just as a thought leader, but as a platform capable of enabling real transformation.

InfoComm 2025 was our chance to publicly step onto that stage. It wasn't perfect timing; our summer roadmap was supposed to be the heavy build phase for courses, community, and content. But the visibility was too important to miss. The mandate became clear: **be ready to tell our story by Infocomm — or lose the moment.**

The Constraints We Faced

- **Time:** Eight weeks to go from zero stack to launch-ready.
- **Resources:** Startup budget, startup headcount.
- **Infinite choice:** A flood of AI-enabled tools, each promising transformation — but at the cost of time to learn, test, and integrate.
- **Balance:** Every hour spent evaluating tech was an hour not spent building NEXXT itself.



Our guiding principle became a hybrid of discipline and ambition:

Use proven, enterprise-grade tools where stability matters most.

Experiment with emerging AI platforms where innovation can differentiate us.

Making the Tough Calls

Some decisions were straightforward. Productivity needed to be instant, we chose Microsoft 365, where the team already had muscle memory. For web infrastructure, WordPress with Astra gave us the flexibility Hostinger's launch builder couldn't sustain.

Others were harder. We wrestled with whether to go "all-in" on an integrated suite like Zoho covering CRM, ticketing, and more or to select best-of-breed solutions. Zoho's promise of unified data was tempting, but onboarding friction and integration quirks at the plugin level cost it points. We leaned toward trusted leaders like HubSpot, where the maturity, adoption, and clean WordPress integration outweighed the allure of a single-vendor ecosystem.

Practicing What We Preach

For a company championing AI-driven transformation, we couldn't just talk we had to show it. That meant making AI readiness a reality from day one. In practical terms:

- **Navi, our AI avatar** became the digital face of NEXXT, guiding learning experiences and setting a precedent for how AI can humanize content delivery.
 - **Custom GPT workflows** replaced manual interviews for content creation. Instead of scheduling human-led calls, industry leaders could "meet" our GPT interviewer, speak in real time, and have transcripts auto-delivered to us. A second GPT transformed those transcripts into draft stories. The result? Faster turnaround, richer narratives, and an engaging experience for contributors — all with tools we already owned.
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When Vision Meets Reality

Our community platform choice perfectly illustrates the tension between ambition and pragmatism. We envisioned a system architected from the ground up with AI, one that could:

- Analyse unstructured data to suggest high-value connections between members.
- Surface the most relevant “needles in the haystack” of content to each user, personalised to their interests.

That platform exists in development (MyPeople). But in early 2025, it wasn’t ready for production. Choosing it then would have meant high risk and uncertain timelines. So, we launched on Mighty Networks, a proven, stable platform that we could extend incrementally with AI features while waiting for next-generation tools to mature.

Lesson: In the AI era, there will always be a “next” platform promising transformation. Sometimes, the right choice is to adopt what works today, while keeping one eye on the roadmap and another on your exit strategy. In AI-centric tools, portability matters; your data, your context, your ability to move may be just as valuable as today’s features.

The Highs, Lows, and Lessons

The emotional rollercoaster of startup life was very real. Watching Navi deliver its first courseware module felt like a glimpse of the future we’re building. Seeing our Mighty Networks community live and active was a tangible milestone. But AI workflows also tested our patience, importing slides from Gamma into HeyGen often meant dealing with glitchy transitions, bleeding layers and reduced control over polish. In the AI age, the “wow” moments often travel alongside the “why won’t this just work?” frustrations.

Lessons we’re taking forward:

1. **Don’t over-engineer in the early days.** Proven tools in core areas reduce risk and free energy for innovation where it matters most.
2. **Choose where to be an early adopter.** Focus on spaces where you can differentiate — for us, AI-driven content delivery and community engagement.



3. **Time is your most precious currency.** Infinite choice is a trap; sometimes “good enough” now beats “perfect” six months later.
 4. **Bet on roadmaps, not just features.** Pick platforms you believe will evolve with you — or ensure you can move when they don’t.
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Early Impact

- **Faster onboarding:** No downtime with Microsoft 365; the team was productive immediately.
 - **Content velocity:** From script to updated course module in hours, not weeks, using Gamma + HeyGen.
 - **Community foundation:** A functioning Mighty Networks platform live pre-Infocomm, ready to grow toward an AI-first vision.
 - **Storytelling at scale:** Custom GPT interview → draft story pipeline operational within days.
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What’s Next

- Continue evolving the community while tracking emerging AI-first platforms.
- Launch our full Courseware offering in Q4, expanding Navi’s capabilities into interactive, LLM-powered learning.
- Explore next-generation marketing tools for demand generation, lead flow, and SEO in the AI era.

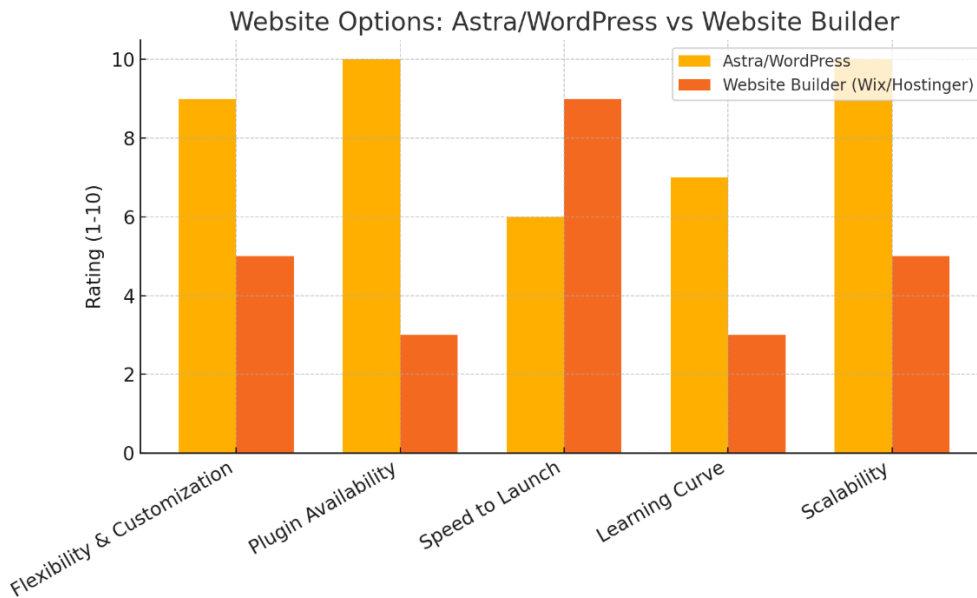


Appendix:

Full platform-by-platform breakdown, selection criteria, and metrics.

Website platform

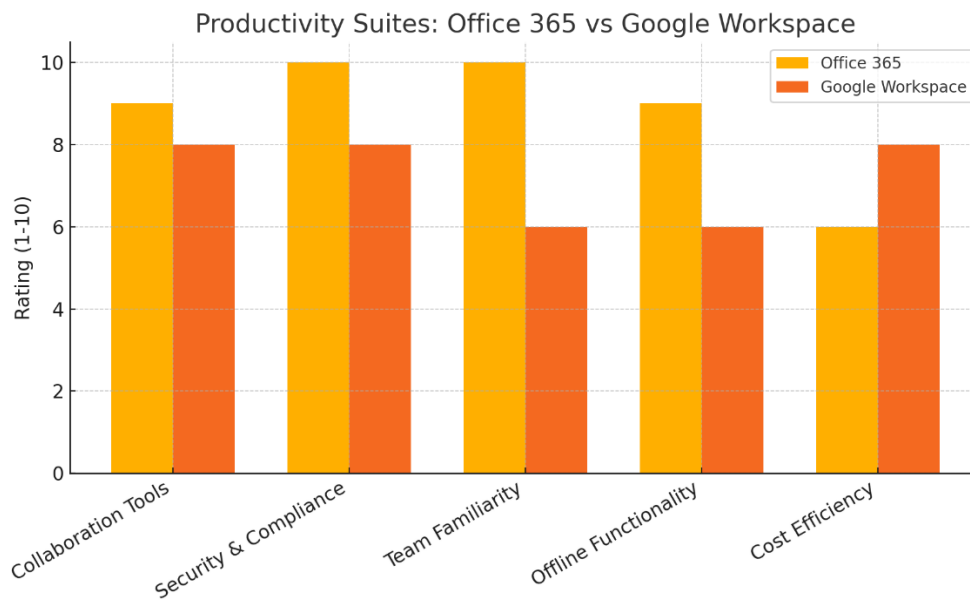
We used Hostinger's builder to make the Infocomm deadline. It was fast and fine for a launch. After the event, we moved to WordPress with Astra for flexibility, performance, and the plugin ecosystem. There was a small learning curve. It was worth it. Marketing can now ship pages without engineering, and we can integrate almost anything.



Takeaway: Automation site builders are great for week one; WordPress is better for year one and beyond.

Productivity suite

We chose Office 365 because the team already lives in it. Teams and SharePoint keep files organized. Outlook and Office apps are muscle memory. It costs more than Google Workspace, but adoption was immediate. No downtime. This matched what worked for us in enterprise settings.



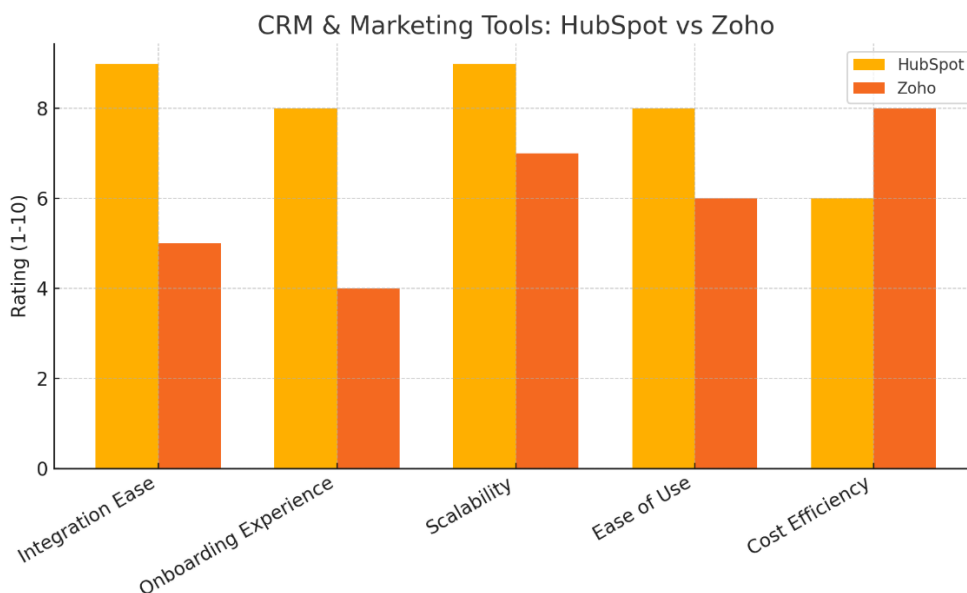
CRM and marketing

We picked HubSpot for integration, ease of use and a clear path to scale. WordPress integration was smooth. Reporting on opens, clicks, bounces, and deliverability was strong. The free tier is restrictive by design, but you can pay as you grow. We looked hard at Zoho. Onboarding and integrations did not meet our bar, with significant time spent simply trying to get a plugin form tied to our Zoho tenant.

Small but useful choice: we used **Gravity Forms** (paid) on the site and pushed leads to HubSpot to avoid HubSpot form branding. It was a nice little workaround and a familiar tool.

How we thought about deliverability and analytics

- Inbox placement and reputation management
- Clear metrics by audience and campaign
- Low engineering lift for the marketing team
- Clean WordPress integration



Takeaway: Hubspot worked right out of the gate, no hassles and easy to get hooked on.

Community Platform

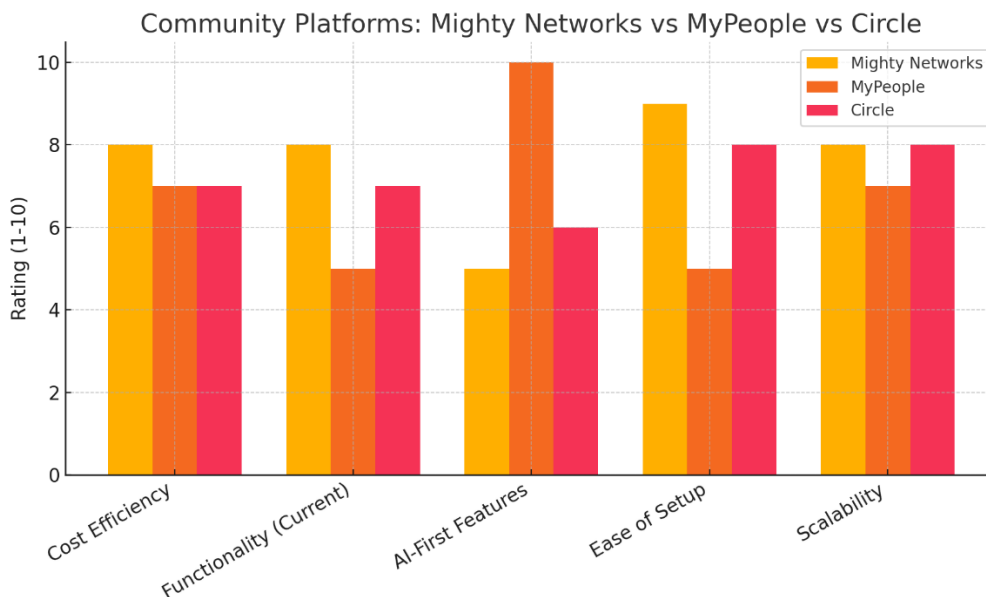
We wanted an AI-first community that suggests matches and sparks conversations. We reviewed **Mighty Networks**, **MyPeople**, and **Circle**.

- MyPeople showed promising AI ideas, but it was not production-ready in time for our launch.
- Circle is solid, but lacked the AI-first roadmap we want.
- Mighty Networks met most needs today and let us ship. It has been stable and capable. You can see it live at community.nexxtnow.com.

We also challenged ourselves with a few questions:

- Why will people come here?
- Are we asking them to repeat work they already do on LinkedIn?
- What does each persona get that they cannot get elsewhere?

We decided to build it because the AV and collaboration space needs a voice. We will keep iterating toward the AI-first experience we want.



Takeaway: The tool that's built and available is sometimes the best one. We will see.



AI tools and Creativity Suite

I used Adobe off and on for years when I had a creative need. It was my default. A small task exposed the shift. I needed a circular headshot from a square image. Illustrator took close to an hour as I hunted for the right controls. ChatGPT produced it in seconds.

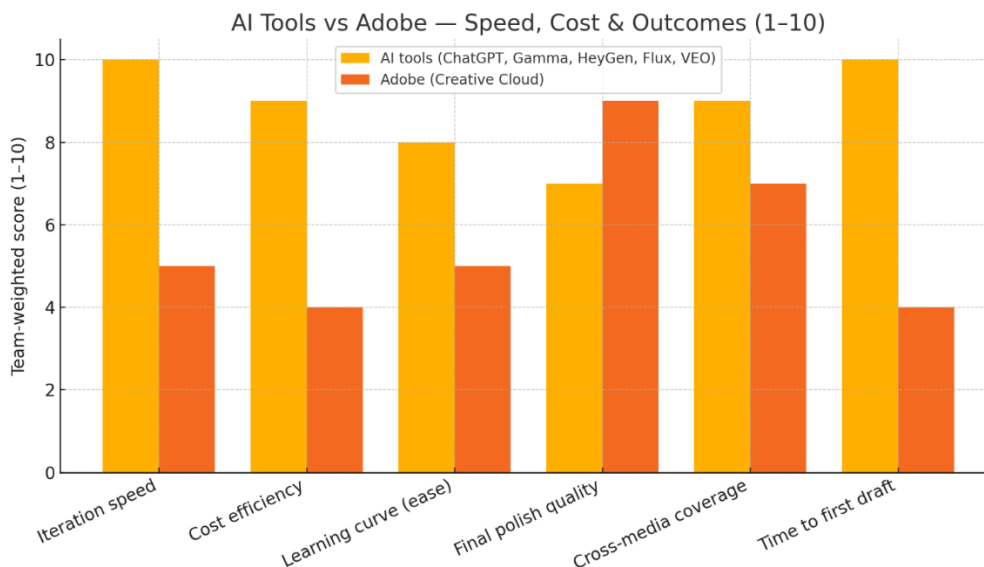
For day-to-day work we rely on ChatGPT, Gamma, HeyGen, Flux, and VEO. They speed iteration across copy, visuals, and video. Adobe still matters for finish work. Pricing in North America increased as All Apps moved to Creative Cloud Pro. The individual plan lists at US\$69.99 per month, about US\$780 per year. A lower-priced Standard tier serves lighter needs. In Canada the annual total varies with currency and tax.

Result: AI tools deliver more speed per dollar today. If I were buying again, I would defer a full Adobe bundle until required.

Workflow

- Explore 5–10 variations with AI.
- Select one direction and refine.
- Finish in Adobe only when AI output misses the mark.

This flow keeps work moving and limits time in heavy, steep-learning-curve tools.

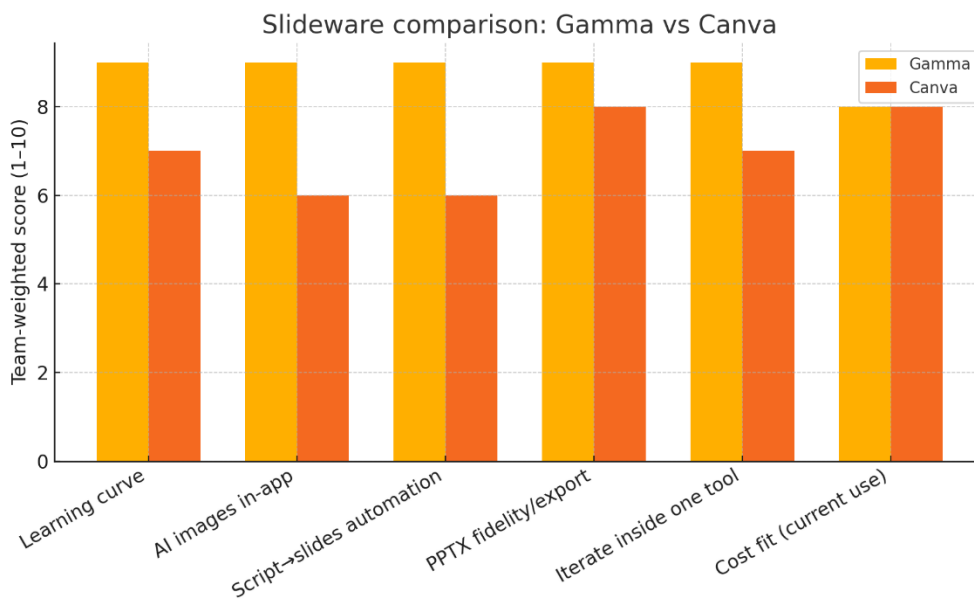


Slideware Creation

We start with a script mapped to the syllabus. It takes real work, but this case study focuses on tooling, not writing. Gamma turns the script into a first-pass deck in PowerPoint format. It aligns sections to slides, lays out structure and bullets, and proposes images. On paid plans, Gamma adds in-deck AI image generation with multiple model choices, so we can iterate inside the deck before any video work. We tested Canva briefly. Gamma felt obvious on day one, so we stayed with it.

Why Gamma over Canva

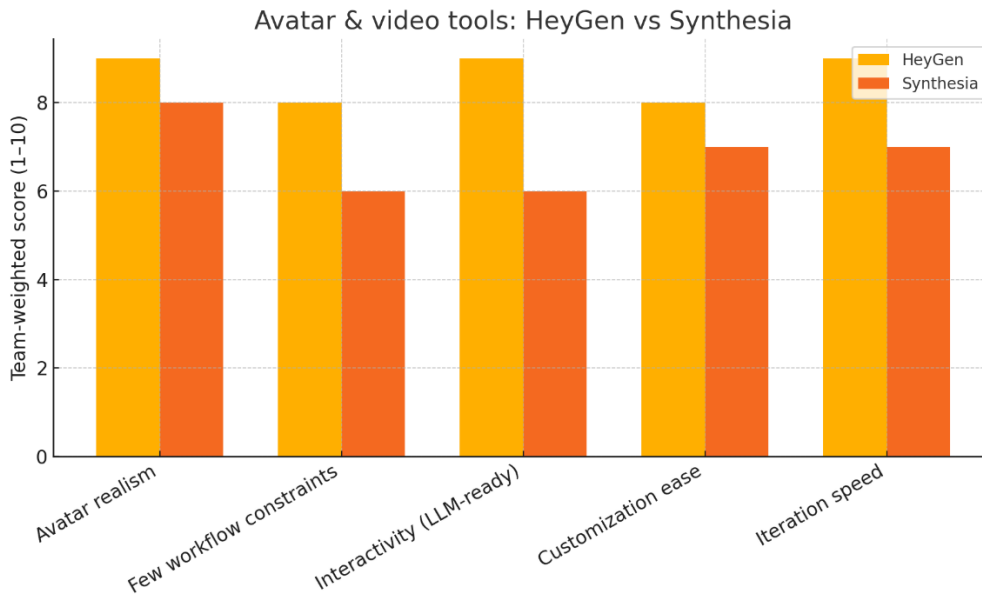
- Faster path from script to slides
- AI image models available in-deck
- Reliable .pptx export and edit in Office, if required
- Lower switching cost for our workflow



Courseware Avatar and Video

With slides covered, we needed a believable avatar and efficient video creation. We compared Synthesia and HeyGen.

Synthesia is capable, but single-scene scripts cap at five minutes and overall minutes depend on the plan, which added limits to our flow. HeyGen felt straightforward. Avatars looked smooth. The current Avatar IV model focuses on lifelike speech, facial motion, and gestures. Interactive avatars that connect to LLMs are in beta, which maps to our goal of more immersive learning.



Result

Gamma for slides. HeyGen for avatar-led video. Script in the morning. Module updated by afternoon.

Stay tuned for what's NEXXT!

