



The Business Case for a Web Content Management System

| A guide for making the case, justifying the cost and choosing the right CMS for your organization |

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Executive Summary

So you've come to the point, as it is with many organizations, where you realize you have a problem managing content on your various Web properties. Whether this is being able to quickly and easily create, edit and publish content without the involvement of technical resources or simply building landing pages for your online marketing initiatives, investing in a Content Management System (CMS) reduces costs and helps overcome potential barriers to all your Web communications. A CMS can also simplify site maintenance, ensure usability and consistent corporate branding, accelerate ROI, and bring information overload under control. As times change, the marketplace finds new reasons for implementing content management systems – such as using them as a basis for content-aware business application development.

However, choosing a CMS can still be a perplexing affair, especially since there are a large number of options available. Choosing the right CMS is not just about finding a product with the right functionality, but also a good understanding of the capabilities needed to meet your organization's current and future requirements. In addition, it is also about dealing with a vendor who can support your needs through the lifetime of the application. But before we get to any of that we first need to build the internal business case for a CMS to answer the question "Why do we need this particular piece of technology?" as well as justify the costs and set the expectations for delivering the ever ubiquitous ROI.

So let's get started. In this whitepaper we will:

- ▶ Examine the business case for deploying a content management system
- ▶ Set expectations and give some best practices for choosing the right CMS
- ▶ Review the high-level results of what a successful implementation should look like and how to quantify the ROI

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The Business Case

The overwhelming complexity of Web sites makes effective Web communication extremely expensive to achieve using manual processes. To further complicate the situation "Web sites" could mean your corporate Web site, Intranet, product catalog, landing pages, mobile devices, campaign microsites, and on and on and on. The take away is that your content is everywhere and more than likely not just on a single Web site. To get a handle on all your Web communications, businesses need tools that decrease the time and complexity for creating and managing this content as well as reduce the cost of "owning" the technology. A CMS accomplishes this by providing tools that automate the publishing process, giving business users the ability to easily create, edit, publish and retire content when they recognize a customer need for information.

The business case for a content management solution usually starts with the cost savings generated by improved Web development and publishing processes. Any business case also hinges on expected results. To meet ROI targets we first need to understand the business objectives and the existing process or operational inefficiencies that are in the way of achieving them. Obviously, this will depend on your specific business, but here are some of the most common offenders:

- ▶ Current publishing processes result in content creation and publishing bottlenecks
- ▶ Inconsistent look and feel across site sections and templates
- ▶ Content contributors do not adopt the current publishing process
- ▶ The site as a search marketing tool is ineffective
- ▶ Training new users and retraining existing users becomes costly and ineffective
- ▶ Current manual process of link management prone to potential broken and/or outdated links on the site
- ▶ Inadequate security



CMS Benefits

A CMS should:

- ▶ Reduce content update costs and improve frequency of information publication
- ▶ Increase Web content value with workflow and approval processes
- ▶ Standardize content structures, and control design and branding across the organization
- ▶ Maximized effectiveness of team skills by enabling business users and subject matter experts to publish their own content
- ▶ Leverage existing enterprise technologies and skills to deploy Web applications
- ▶ Reduce site creation, maintenance, and enterprise roll out costs by creating automated processes

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- ▶ Ineffective processes for the building and authorization of the information that gets published to the site
- ▶ Costly site “re-launch” that prevents Web site evolution
- ▶ Inability to forecast yearly budgets due to sporadic nature of content change requirements as well as hardware and software costs
- ▶ Inability to accurately determine authorship and posting dates for legal purposes

Clearly, a CMS is necessary to address these issues. The projected benefits of CMS implementation are easy to see – but will the application you finally implement deliver on those promises? Will it adapt and mold itself to your organization, and conform to your unique business environment? And will it do all these things at the right price point – not just in terms of purchase, but in terms of long-term maintenance?

These questions underline the importance of following the right process in choosing a CMS.

The Right Process: Choosing the Appropriate Solution

Requirements Analysis

Like any other software project, implementing a CMS requires a detailed requirement analysis of the existing system. Evaluate your organization’s needs first, and then map them to choose the right CMS. Without this clear vision of business goals, CMS implementations can overshoot budgets, and in the long run, fail to deliver returns that justify the investment.

Understanding the content landscape

A CMS cannot be chosen with only technology in mind; if you have difficulties with ensuring consistent content quality, even the most advanced CMS cannot improve the situation. In this case the need for flexible workflow processes in place to require approval and easy editing of content becomes very important.



Selecting the right CMS: a quick checklist

- ▶ Does it provide all the features you require?
- ▶ How widely it is used?
- ▶ Are there other organizations similar to you using it?
- ▶ Does it require any specialized Web hosting?
- ▶ Can it produce Web sites that meet current Web and accessibility standards?
- ▶ Does it have a support forum where you can get help and guidance from other users?
- ▶ What documentation, manuals and training are available?
- ▶ What process exists to update the CMS and any third party modules or extensions in the future?
- ▶ What are the projected costs of maintenance and support in the long term?

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Involving all key stakeholders

The success of a CMS depends largely on adoption by the end-user community. Non-technical subject matter experts (SMEs) must be able to easily and intuitively use the system to achieve the exact presentation of content they want. Feedback from content owners will also help in building and customizing the system. Involving these stakeholders right from the outset also reduces reluctance to use the new system.

Understanding the services aspect

Your CMS needs to be as flexible as your organization, accommodating everything from simple template changes to an entire site redesign. Some level of service will be required - be it from your internal IT department, your Web agency, or your software vendor.

On top of ongoing support and management, you also need basic application and infrastructure support specifically for installed, open source or custom built software. This requires the efforts of a dedicated team, responsible for managing hardware, software, and the network. Without this dedicated team, small businesses often outsource these 'services' to a third party vendor, adding to incrementally to ongoing maintenance and support costs.

The right metrics

Metrics allow for a precise way to define what a content management project will accomplish. For effectiveness, metrics should be (wherever possible) quantitative rather than qualitative. For example, instead of having a broad metric such as 'Achieve significant reduction in IT costs', organizations could instead have defined metrics such as 'Achieve 20% reduction in IT costs in the first year'. Also be aware that just because you can measure something doesn't necessarily mean you should measure it. Choose what is most important to your business objectives and stick with those. As your site evolves, so will your metrics criteria.

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Content Management Systems: A Quick Head-to-Head Comparison

Types of CMS	Advantages	Disadvantages
Traditional Installed CMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Feeling of security because the software is installed locally ▶ More control of immediate software environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Requires a large amount of system administration – upgrades, patches, hardware maintenance, etc. ▶ More difficult to have decentralized users of the CMS ▶ Is dependent on current IT infrastructure and integrations which leads to slower and more complex implementations
Homegrown CMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Customized to company requirements ▶ Existing internal resources can be used to build the application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Long development cycles ▶ Typically doesn't take into account future business needs ▶ Usability often takes a back seat to raw functionality so end user adoption is typically low ▶ More difficult to have decentralized users of the CMS ▶ Is dependent on current IT infrastructure and integrations which leads to slower and more complex implementations
Open Source CMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Code base is free and easily available ▶ Very basic packages can be live fairly quickly ▶ Broad development base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Is usually just a basic CMS shell and requires extensive customization for most business use ▶ Because the perception is that Open Source is "free", the substantial implementation and support costs are often not taken into account and not budgeted for ▶ Requires a large amount of system administration – upgrades, patches, hardware maintenance, etc. ▶ Depending on business requirements can be sparse on more advanced CMS features and functionality ▶ Accountability for 'free' products is usually minimal

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Types of CMS	Advantages	Disadvantages
Software-as-a-Service CMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ No Software to install, hardware to buy or infrastructure to manage ▶ Platform agnostic ▶ Faster implementation cycle because the application is live and ready to go on day 1 ▶ Usually based on a monthly subscription fee so you only pay for what you use ▶ Cost of the application is spread out over time so there are never any budgeting surprises ▶ End users have easier access to the application no matter where they are located because the CMS is accessed through a Web browser ▶ Vendor assumes all responsibility for application upgrades, patches, maintenance and security. ▶ All customers are always running the most current version of the software ▶ Since technical resources aren't focused on maintaining the application organizations can divert resources elsewhere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Information has to live outside the firewall. ▶ Access to information is determined by Internet connectivity

Results of Implementing a CMS

There are many costs involved in building and maintaining a Web site, and these costs can increase exponentially as its size, complexity, and audience grows. The benefits of a content management system are realized in that it, automates most standard content and design management tasks, and can boost efficiency and reduce costs in the areas of content updates and accuracy, reinforcement of corporate style and branding, and application development.

Implementing the right CMS solution will produce results in several ways:

- ▶ Significantly reduce the time required to implement site content changes or re-designs
- ▶ Improve availability of timely and accurate information
- ▶ Facilitate the re-use of content to multiple Web sites (or divisions of sites) and through new business channels, thus creating content once and using many times

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- ▶ Build processes to control the flow of published material to ensure approvals, consistency and auditing
- ▶ Speed up time-to-market to capitalize on new business opportunities and gain competitive advantage
- ▶ Remove expensive development bottlenecks
- ▶ Separate technical delivery from content creation to empower business users
- ▶ Improve people productivity by making business-critical company information more easily available

QUANTIFIABLE BENEFITS

Reduced resource requirements, reduced site maintenance costs

With the right CMS solution in place, the resources needed for on-going site maintenance are substantially reduced and valued skills can be redirected into developing more business applications. In addition to these savings, there are benefits like people productivity improvements, document production and distribution cost savings, increased market exposure, faster time-to-market of new site development to maintain competitive advantage, and improved quality of customer service.

Marketing tool

The Web is at the core of your online marketing and content is at the core of the Web. Your ability to manage this content is what makes your online marketing efforts flexible, easily adaptable to change and most importantly effective. Whatever marketing metrics are important to you - lead generation, site traffic, conversion rates or revenue - they can all be tied to your CMS.

Web site - Giving subject matter experts access to quickly and easily create and edit content on the Web site provides end users with a better more relevant experience.

SEM - Creating campaign or even keyword-specific content on your site is essential for keeping conversion rates up.

SEO - The more relevant and updated content you put on your Web site the better your look to search engines. Also being able to provide search engine friendly URLs and easily providing metadata on pages and assets increase your organic search rankings.

Web 2.0 - The Web is now bidirectional. We are no longer just posting brochures online. It's an expectation for your end users to be able to comment and even contribute content on your sites using blogs, RSS, wikis and polling. Being able to listen as well as respond to your end users is the Web 2.0 world.

Landing Pages - As we are better able to track responses, the need for multiple landing pages is a must. Whether these are for Google PPC campaigns or email blasts, being able to easily create and manage landing pages with in the CMS is invaluable.

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Separation of content from design reduces costs of site re-branding

Most organizations want to re-brand their Web venues at least once a year. Potential cost savings for multiple re-brands each year can be significant using content management tools.

Easier and centralized access to assets

As a result of implementing content management applications, organizations are achieving higher performance in several areas:

- ▶ Time that staff spend finding and using information is reduced (digital asset management)
- ▶ Access to management and financial information is faster, empowering senior management to make better, more informed decisions
- ▶ More staff are contributing to and accessing the company's intelligence
- ▶ The organization's collective capabilities are better understood.

Increased productivity

Productivity is the metric that most organizations try to tie numbers to; ironically it is also one of the hardest to quantify. But it can definitely be done. Productivity measurements usually fall into one of three areas:

Time - The hours, days, or weeks saved by users of the CMS in creating, editing, reviewing and publishing content.

Technology - The increase in value from the CMS, versus a manual or legacy process that the application is replacing. For example, with a hosted Web content management solution the productivity of the IT staff increases because the shift from managing hardware and infrastructure of the CMS shifts to more mission critical applications within the enterprise.

Resources - Simply the better use of your employee resources. Are your marketing resources better used managing content rather than creating it? Or as a twist to the above example, are your IT resources adding more value installing software patches and upgrades rather than creating new functionality within the CMS to support marketing?

QUALITATIVE BENEFITS

Content management is now recognized as critical infrastructure for supporting implementation of a successful Web strategy, and is therefore a significant contributor to benefits that are more difficult to quantify but are still of strategic importance.

Intellectual property management

Content is an intellectual asset and therefore a CMS can help exploit that asset for business gain and competitive advantage. The right CMS can enable faster time-to-market of content dissemination, building 'agility'.

Perception of the brand and customer impact

Keeping the Web site fresh and interesting will maintain the company's reputation by representing a professional image consistent with the offline brand.

Removing barriers to growth

Content management can remove barriers of new site growth, allowing rapid addition of information that may contribute to improvements in customer service levels, customer retention, user sessions, and revenue streams.

The future needs of the organization

You can never know exactly what's waiting around the corner from a competitive, regulatory or industry standpoint. But having a consistent way to access and manage the information within your organization can definitely make navigating around those corners a bit easier:

Proving what content was live on a given date for legal purposes

Multilingual capabilities to expand Web presence and service other potential customers collaborating with partners to create content (through Web-based systems with flexible user permissions)

Conclusion

Going by the estimates that content management markets which stood at \$1 billion in 2003 are expected to reach \$2.1 billion by 2009, a CMS has now become a crucial part of achieving business objectives. So the question is less of if a CMS is right for your business, but rather what CMS is right for your business. Following the right process can assure selection of the appropriate solution and deliver rapid ROI. We hope that this whitepaper has provided some helpful insights into how to build the business case as well as decide which type makes the most sense for your organization.

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