



Getting Closer to the Customer with a CMS

| Using a CMS to Align Your Global and Local Needs |

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Getting Closer to the Customer with a CMS

Internet statistics monitoring firm, internetworldstats.com, estimates the world's Internet population to be around 1.2 billion users – usage having grown by more than 240% in the period between 2000 and 2007. So it's no surprise that the Internet is a vast unmanageable ocean of information, and this ocean has created waves of questions. How do you stand out among the clutter? How do you ensure that your Web site, like your company, caters to global and local needs? If you have different Web sites for different local markets, how do you make sure that all the content on these sites is aligned with your global guidelines?

Further, in a Web 2.0 world, your Web presence has to accommodate audience demands for two-way interaction between company and user. Users are going to hunt for the same products or services with a variety of keywords – underlining the importance of 'search-engine friendliness'.

The good news is that current Content Management Systems (CMS) have evolved to a stage where they can actually enable organizations to address these challenges - and be flexible to inevitable change.

Understanding Customer Needs

Marketing expert Roxanne Lott puts it succinctly: "You can't be all things to all people. And never was this statement more true than when creating an online marketing campaign." Creating completely individual messages for all your customers is clearly impossible; however, it is important to understand the needs of different subsets within your target market.

Every time customers visit your Web site, they provide several opportunities for you to study their behavior - and gather information that can become valuable market intelligence. These insights are immediately actionable, and can be used to drive more targeted campaigns. Based on user surfing or downloading trends, you can segment a large market into smaller clusters or categories.

For instance, if a large percentage of users are downloading a whitepaper related to 'Sarbanes-Oxley Compliance,' you can use this market intelligence to actually create a different section on your Web site, or even launch a campaign around this solution.

Does Your Content Work?

This is all pretty basic stuff and shouldn't really be a surprise to anyone. But before you can think of segmenting customers on the basis of surfing patterns, you have to first build the foundation. And this foundation is driven by content – as it is content alone that will determine how relevant and available to search engines your Web site is or how 'sticky' your Web site is. This content has to keep visitors engaged, and be search engine friendly at the same time. Here are some points to keep in mind:

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▶ Do the research

Think about your offerings in detail. Ensure that the content you create reflects their merits in ways that your target audience can appreciate.

▶ Analyze your existing presence

Examine your existing Web presence to see what's working and what isn't. This will help put together a coherent plan for the future.

▶ Conversion is the key

Copy that reads well is not enough. How many visitors actually become prospects? How many are then qualified? And how many become customers after reading your content? That's the key.

This is where a CMS can help. Your subject matter experts can use clear and concise templates to create content the way they want, without worrying about formatting changes. The marketing team can then work with the subject matter experts to refine messages based on their understanding of the brand, customer needs, trends, and business objectives. The CMS empowers these non-technical members of your team to publish all of this content on to the site – while maintaining consistency and providing for a professional customer experience. Completely process driven, content management systems enable centralized publishing of content and also ensure that content goes through necessary approval stages before publishing.

Besides quality, you also need the agility to react proactively to changing business dynamics. For instance, can you quickly repurpose content to create a marketing sales kit in case a business opportunity suddenly comes up? Again, a CMS can help. Enough about the foundation; let us now look at how you can make this content create and win business opportunities.

Building and Using Customer Profiles

To take full advantage of online opportunities, it is vital for your organization to have a 360 degree view of the customer. This is possible by integrating the CMS with Web analytics software, e-mail marketing software or a CRM.

While the analytics and the CRM give you a complete picture of the customer, the CMS provides the ability to customize pages according to customer profile. For example, the CMS could automatically push a 'hot' or frequently downloaded whitepaper to the homepage. While download data is provided by the Web analytics solution, the CMS acts upon this data based on a defined workflow that can be flexibly modified. Accordingly, different metrics can be defined in a CMS's workflow, and the Web site can be quickly modified to suit business needs.

Similarly, if the CMS is integrated with an e-mail marketing solution such as ExactTarget, you can easily launch targeted e-mail campaigns. With such integration, a user registering himself on an organization's Web site can automatically be tagged according to his preference and added to the database or subscriber list.

If a member of your organization wants to start a new email campaign, he simply specifies the target area in the CMS, and chooses content relevant to his target area. So you're actually publishing the content from the CMS directly into the email marketing software, acting as a single source of content. What's more, you can now manage email subscription forms within the CMS, create new landing pages with subscription forms, or edit existing newsletter subscription forms. With the integration, campaigns are more accurate - as you can push highly relevant content that is of interest to each subscriber group. Besides accuracy, organizations also gain from the simplicity, flexibility and speed of executing such campaigns.

Taking Advantage of the Web 2.0 World

In a Web 2.0 world, organizations can benefit from the ability of content management systems to track and analyze user feedback such as comments, in addition to ratings and subscriptions. This data can be used to measure the success of online initiatives. Comments posted to blogs can be monitored through workflows present in the CMS. The CMS can also be used for automatically publishing content as RSS feeds: visitors to a company's Web site can personalize their RSS feeds by defining a keyword or phrase. When new content related to the keyword or phrase appears on the Web site, personalized content is automatically pushed.

The SaaS Advantage

Integrating the CMS with e-mail marketing software or a Web analytics solution can be a big challenge. The need of the hour is an integrated content management solution that offers built-in or easy integration with diverse products, such as those from WebTrends, ExactTarget, Salesforce.com, and more.

In a Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) solution, the integration is the responsibility of the vendor – allowing you to focus on core competencies. Besides the integration, SaaS providers offer customer support as part of their service package. With no software to install or hardware to purchase, a SaaS solution can easily cost less than 60% of the comparable costs of a similar traditional solution. As a customer, you just pay a fixed subscription fee on a monthly or quarterly basis and leave the task of managing, maintaining and upgrading the software to the vendor.

Thus, for organizations considering active, consistent and long-term online marketing, a CMS combined with Web analytics tools can prove to be extremely effective in tailoring content according to diverse user needs.

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