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Content Management Solution: Does Your Site Really Need One?



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You've heard the term CMS, or Content Management System, but do you understand what it means? Does it refer to a prepackaged solution or any website providing end-users a way to dynamically edit data? For the purpose of this article, "CMS" is defined as a free open source publication-oriented content management system. Let's start with how implementing a CMS on your website can help you manage website content more efficiently. We'll examine the benefits of the top 3 CMS solutions currently available and discuss situations when a CMS may be more than you need. Ready? Let's go...

The Internet is ever-changing in all aspects—from the content to the technologies used to present it; what you see today may be far removed from what you see tomorrow. Unlike a monthly print magazine whose content can only be refreshed once a month, content on the web is subject to rapid and radical change at any time. This has given rise to the CMS.

The Contenders

Drupal : The longest-running project of the 3 discussed here, [Drupal](#) enjoys the benefits that come with that: a large community, extensive documentation, and loads of custom modules contributed by the community. It can be configured to handle almost any possible use - from small "brochureware" websites to extensive multi-tiered web applications.

It's important to note, however, Drupal maintains a status amongst many as being "for developers, by developers." While recent releases are starting to chip away at this perception, it can still be extremely formidable to initially configure.

WordPress: [WordPress](#)' history is deeply rooted in blogging and this reputation still exists. There is a significant portion of the development community whose only exposure to PHP came about as a result of modifying a WordPress installation. Beyond being a brilliant blogging application, WordPress is gaining ground as a general purpose application that can be configured to be more than just a blog.

Another major advantage of WordPress is the sheer number of available templates. There are numerous free ones available from the WordPress site, but if you're willing to pay, some absolutely beautiful standards-compliant templates are available at a multitude of sites...for a price.

Joomla!: In 2005, [Joomla!](#) sprung into life as a branch off from the Mambo CMS. In a very short time, it has witnessed a very high adoption rate and has won several awards. This is a CMS to watch if you're thinking long-term; already the community is shaping Joomla! into everything from forums to blogs to straightforward

corporate websites.

Afterthought:

You're now wondering if one of these systems would work for you. As a developer, I've seen both sides of the issue. Development teams may spend too much time extending a CMS into something new when a hand-coded system would be easier, faster and cheaper. In other cases, too much time may be spent updating content by hand. Just recently, for example, I witnessed a 4-person team of developers spend 120 man-hours porting a 10-page site into DotNetNuke. Frustrations arose as they realized a core component of DNN (specifically, the URL rewriter) was not able to properly format as they wanted. Imagine being the client and getting the bill for that!

CMS solutions offer a variety of benefits. If your business needs are simple, you may find that while WordPress is a great way to run your blog, trying to extend it into a complete product ordering and shopping cart solution is beyond your means. On the flip side, if you know you're spending too much time coding HTML/CSS by hand whenever you want to update your site, you may find that a little bit of time spent researching and installing a CMS solution could be the best decision you ever make for your business.

Buzzword: Abandonment Rate

Abandonment rate, also known as drop off rate, refers to the percentage of users who leave your site during the steps in the ordering/conversion process. This key performance indicator is used to determine where visitors are leaving in the purchasing process in order to locate and minimize areas of weakness. There are two main ways to calculate Abandonment Rate. The first is $\text{Abandonment Rate} = (\text{Visits of the current Conversion Step} - \text{Visits of the previous Conversion Step}) / \text{Visits of the First Conversion Step}$. Another options is $\text{Abandonment Rate} = (\text{Visits of the current Conversion Step} - \text{Visits of the previous Conversion Step}) / \text{Visits of the previous Conversion Step}$.

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