

Content Management System (CMS) Overview Whitepaper

March 06, 2006

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There are generally two types of site architecture and content within websites, static and dynamic:

Static content is content that is coded directly into each page. To change the content for a page, the code of that page must be altered and written back to that page manually.

Dynamic content works a little differently. All of the content for the site is stored in a database repository. When a page is requested on the Internet the website requests the information from the database and then displays the most current info. It sounds simple but actually there is a lot that needs to go on in the background. This is where a dedicated content management system (CMS) comes in. Now with the content in a database and the CMS to manage and deliver content, many functions are now possible.

Some of the features CMS can provide are:

Multilingual.

The CMS can easily manage many different languages concurrently within the system.

This allows for ease of new language installation without major coding changes.

Also, the system can track and match the translations of pages and documents to the original language text and location. Without CMS multiple languages requires significant manual maintenance.

Search.

Users can attach meta data to the content in the database to provide meaningful searches to users.

Content control.

Version control, roll back content and content history management.

Convenient interface.

A central interface to manage all content from one place. Usually the CMS has a built in visual hierarchy of the entire site for easy management.

Content lifecycle.

Content can automatically expire or come on-line. You can set and control when content goes up or down to the site for time sensitive info.

Access levels and accountability.

Easy to give different people in the organization control over the content they are responsible for.

Collaboration.

Information and content and its management can be shared easily between departments, teams or other locations.

Content workflow.

Content can go through an approval process and even can be placed in a testing (or sometimes called staging) version of the site. So if this is set up then every piece of content must go through the approval process and signed off or it can not go live.

Metrics and Statistics.

Very specific and customizable metrics and stats are usually available.

Multichannel publishing.

Ability to enter content once into the central depository and publish content in multiple places simultaneously (i.e. Internet, Intranet, email, fax, print). This also maintains consistency and up to date content across all channels.

Compliance.

Many organizations need to follow industry compliance regulations for information and content. These can be build into the system along with the ability to set policies for retaining, storing, and retrieving specific content. With the central repository of content / data in place, it is easier to implement other functionality such as business process automation, imaging systems / paperless office, internal document, file and data management systems, records systems etc.

Cost

The cost of a CMS system ranges greatly. Some of the higher end 'name brand' systems start between \$50,000 - \$140,000 for licensing alone. This doesn't include the cost for hardware, installation, consulting, customization and implementation of the site.

While these high end systems do have their place, we find that for most companies (even large ones) there are more cost effective options. There are great open source solutions that have very similar functionality and are available for free. This means that the license for the software is free (not totally free). This enables the client to save the expensive up front license fees (and also yearly ones too) and only spend to customize and implement.

The right provider can also offer a hosted service where clients don't have to buy and maintain their own hardware to host the CMS.

Steps towards implementing a CMS

1. You must have either a website or the content to build a website. Many times companies like to do a redesign of their website along with the CMS installation.
2. You should understand the functionality that your company would like to get from a CMS. You can talk to your IT provider or research on the Internet to help you understand this.
3. Will you use it for Intranet and Internet? Only one? This will have to be planned out carefully to decide if you will need a hosted service or if you will host it on hardware within your company.
4. Talk to your IT provider and have them evaluate your requirements in order to provide a solution that will fit for the short and long term.

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