

# WHITE PAPER

## APPLYING CONTENT MANAGEMENT TO WEBSITE ADMINISTRATION

There are many features and benefits of a content management system (CMS) that should be taken into consideration when deciding whether it is the right tool for the design and ongoing administration of your web presence. While not every organization will benefit equally from implementing a CMS, most content management systems will confer at least the following benefits: increase the ease and speed of adding or modifying content, automate many repetitive tasks, decentralize the control of your website, separate the form from the content of your website, and allow information to be made widely accessible and reusable.

Maybe you've already got a website. Maybe you're even pretty happy with it. Maybe you think your current method for managing it is sufficient. And maybe you're right.

But then again, maybe you're not.

You might be considering using a Content Management System (CMS) for the administration of your website. To help you decide, here are some of the key benefits of employing a CMS.

## Ease of use

As anyone who has had to use them knows, manual methods for the management of web content are time consuming, clunky, and repetitive. Furthermore, they often necessitate learning, if not HTML, then at least two or three different pieces of software in order to achieve your final product.

A good CMS provides an alternative. It incorporates a word processor, webpage design studio, and HTML- or XML-editor into one simple browser-enabled interface. Adopting such a system can drastically reduce the time and resource necessary to get everyone in your firm trained in numerous applications. And the cost of those very applications is entirely eliminated. One single application dedicated to the upkeep and management of your website might be a good idea if you've got a lot of information being operated on by a lot of users.

And, of course, increased ease of use means increased use: with a CMS, all of your employees will be able to add, modify, and structure your website's content directly. It becomes unnecessary to have your technical professionals laboriously format and post every individual page of content submitted to them by the appropriate department or individual.

And that's not just sensible, but positively beneficial. After all, your IT personnel are too valuable to squander on the non-technical aspects of website management. And your non-technical staff are too valuable in their own areas for you to waste their

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time with long, drawn-out training sessions in difficult-to-master applications. A CMS allows everyone to do what they do best, and do it efficiently, without interference or diversion.

## Human error eliminated

It's often been said that all computer error is, at bottom, human error. This is certainly the case with content creation. After all, who can be held responsible for the mistakes on your website, if not the designers and authors who built it?

Well, by adopting a CMS to manage your web presence, you transfer some of the trickier design and authoring responsibilities to a sophisticated piece of software that has, presumably, been rigorously QA-tested and carefully fine-tuned. This means that silly typos or minor coding errors will never occur, which means the big problems those silly mistakes can lead to will never come to pass.

Even the most knowledgeable and proficient coder of HTML is liable to occasionally strike the wrong key. But browsers are unforgiving, and so are the visitors who reach your site with those browsers. Vaporlinks, error messages, even misspellings can turn away a potential client. After all, if this is the sort of thing they get from your website, why should they expect a greater dedication to quality in your business transactions?

A CMS is a good way to keep the quality of your web presence high, and the style of your website consistent.

## Visibility

Of course your website caters to a particular audience, but that's no guarantee that every one of your visitors is going to be using the same version of the same browser. This is also true of employees accessing your intranet. You can never be sure how your viewers are accessing your site, so it's important to make your pages visible on as many platforms as possible. If a potential customer can't view your site, or can only view an inferior version of it, he or she is no longer a potential customer, because he or she has already moved on to the competition's website. A good CMS will enable you to ensure that your pages are universally visible. Reputable developers test the content created by their CMS from a variety of platforms and applications, and do not rest until

it looks as good as possible from as many points of view as possible. This is the business they're in, so naturally they're going to do it well.

## Speed

You have a lot of critical information that needs to be communicated to a lot of people in not a lot of time. Up-to-date product information needs to be made available to your customers. All manner of internal data needs to be accessible by many different departments. And your affiliates, partners, and stakeholders of every stripe need to be apprised of what you're up to, every step of the way.

It is of crucial importance that your content reach those who need it as quickly as possible. Because in today's market, instant gratification has become the norm. The Internet explosion itself has contributed to the assumption that communication should be instantaneous. Long waits often lead to lost sales or strained relations. Delays are often interpreted as hesitation or uncertainty. In short, silence can be deadly.

Though it may be the least of ways in which a CMS can speed your operation towards delivering its content, such a system eliminates the need for rote repetition of common tasks. The automation inherent in a CMS ensures that your content creators will use their time to its utmost potential.

Of greater consequence is the way that a CMS can streamline the content management process and greatly dilate, if not completely eliminate, workflow bottlenecks.

## Decentralization

The division of labor can be extremely profitable, but it can also lead to bottlenecks. If only a handful of people within your operation are responsible for the administration of your website, but everyone is responsible for some portion of its content, there's going to be a lot of waiting for changes to go through.

**Eliminate** bottlenecks  
by **decentralizing** the  
**management and**  
**maintenance** of your **site**

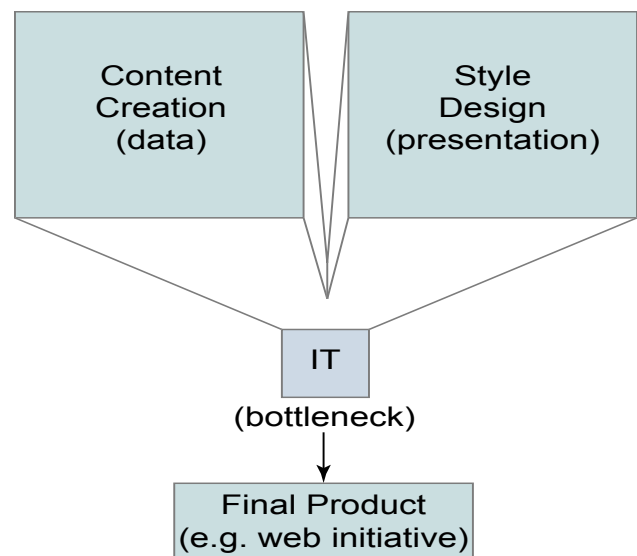
And if a few key people fall ill, go on vacation, or walk out, updates can cease altogether.

A good CMS will eliminate these bottlenecks by decentralizing the management and maintenance of your site. Your technical professionals will be able to retain complete control of user-rights designations, site layout, and (if you are employing a server-based CMS) administration and upkeep of hardware and software, while your non-technical employees will be empowered to add and modify content, as required and as allowed.

In this way, the decentralization of your website management prevents one side of the content-creation process from stepping on the other's toes or being at the other's mercy, and allows both sides to get more done, more swiftly.

## Separation of form from content

A good CMS keeps your data and your data's presentation separate by intelligently structuring your information, and your instructions for the way that information is to appear. The most effective means for achieving this division of form and content is through open standards such as XML (the eXtensible Markup Language) and XSL (the eXtensible Stylesheet Language).



Traditional content management bottlenecks occur when both the form and the content must be coded at the same time, usually by busy IT professionals. CMS tools that allow the separation of content creation from content presentation (such as Comspec's MediaClay) eliminate such bottlenecks.

By systematizing the style and structure of your website with templates and stylesheets, your CMS makes inconsistencies of presentation a thing of the past. The look, feel and navigation of your site remain constant, so visitors never get confused, lost, or flustered. This is especially important for larger websites or intranets with vast repositories of content. It becomes a formidable challenge for these sites' custodians to ensure that every page is easily locatable and linked to in a consistent and intuitive way. This is perhaps one of the greatest benefits of a CMS: that it gives all your pages the same professional and recognizable look. And it will do this for any number of pages, without risking overwhelming or discombobulating the viewer.

Furthermore, stylesheets enable the fruitful separation of data from its presentation. This way, each element can be managed by those best suited to the task. The addition of content will not necessitate an entire site overhaul, and the remodeling of your pages' appearance can be effected quickly and without modifying your content whatsoever.

## Repurposing of data

Every department and every level of your organization may have its idiosyncratic methods and applications for working with data. That doesn't mean that same data needs to be idiosyncratically stored, or that it can't be shared between departments. On the contrary, complete interoperability is essential.

A powerful CMS ensures that every bit of your content will be potentially accessible to and usable by every area in your company. The best systems have adopted the versatile set of document definitions called XML in order to intelligently identify and label your data. XML is an internationally recognized public standard for the storage, treatment and sharing of information. This means that your content is guaranteed to not only have unparalleled interoperability within your operation, but to be reusable and repurposable outside it, as well.

## Conclusion

All of the above features and benefits should be taken into consideration when deciding whether a content management system is the right tool for the design and ongoing administration of your web presence.

Not every organization will benefit equally from implementing such a system, but, as the above should make clear, many will benefit. Most decent content management systems will, at the very least, increase the ease and speed of adding or modifying content, automate many repetitive tasks, decentralize the control of your website, separate the form from the content of your website, and allow your information to be made widely accessible and reusable.

This is why many businesses, no matter what their size, may find a CMS to be a powerful, indeed invaluable, tool for the management of their website.

Every bit of your content  
will be **potentially**  
**accessible** to every area  
**in your company**



For more information on this and many other topics, please contact Comspec or visit our Resource Center on the web.

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