



WEB CMS SELECTION:

How to Go From
Shortlist to Final Selection

Choosing the right CMS isn't easy. Beyond scalability, there are key concerns around user experience, ease of integration, customizability, data security, reliability, and more. That's why it's critical for organizations to evaluate a wide variety of solutions to determine the CMS that will best meet its needs.

THE RIGHT WEB CMS STREAMLINES YOUR BUSINESS PROCESSES

A CMS offers both developers and marketers the ability to manage and update content, while maintaining brand standards for creative assets and user experience. With the right CMS, users can:

- **Efficiently update and format site content.**

Building out content assets and making updates is fast, easy, and hassle-free. For marketers, proficiency in HTML and CSS should not be required.

- **Grow the content team, while enforcing brand standards and quality control.** With a CMS, it's easy for content managers to give the proper permissions to each user. In this way, content creators can quickly create content, and content managers can review, edit, and schedule content for publication without delays.



With the right CMS, growing the content team is smooth and seamless.

BUT CHOOSING THE WRONG CMS CAN SPELL DISASTER

If your team selects a CMS platform that doesn't accommodate your needs, you may discover rebellion in the ranks of users. They'll find unsupported workarounds to common challenges.

Or worse, they'll write off the CMS completely, and ask their counterparts in IT to take care of simple site updates. In short, the investment you made in your CMS is not paying dividends. In fact, it only serves to get in the way.

GOING FROM SHORTLIST TO FINAL SELECTION

This eBook assumes that you have a shortlist of 3+ CMS vendors. The goal of this eBook is to help you make a final selection. If you don't already have a shortlist, you'll want to read our free white paper [A Buyer's Guide to Web CMS](#).

Narrowing your shortlist down to a single selection isn't easy. This eBook outlines what CMS features and functions you'll need to keep in mind while evaluating your shortlist.

Before we explore how to make a final selection, let's first highlight important considerations your buying committee will need to make.



3

Important Considerations for IT

Your IT team is responsible for installing, configuring and maintaining your organization's CMS. In addition, the IT team provides end user support to the assorted CMS authors, editors and designers. In some cases, the IT team will develop custom modules to extend the functionality provided by the CMS platform.

To go from shortlist to final selection, your IT team can assess CMS vendors' answers to the following questions:

IS THE CMS A SOLID, LONG-TERM INVESTMENT?

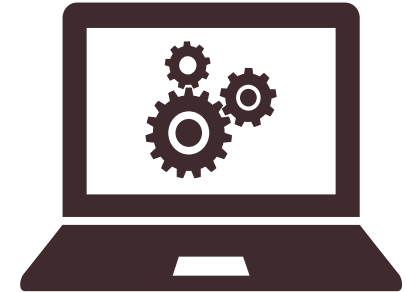
Purchasing a CMS is a long-term investment. On average, customers of the Evoq CMS stay with DNN for 8 years. To determine whether a CMS is a solid, long-term investment, assess the soundness of the vendor's strategic vision and roadmap.

Determine how often they provide minor and major software releases. And finally, have your web developers assess the platform's extensibility model, to understand what's involved in building custom extensions and applications.

DOES THE CMS PROVIDE BUILT-IN INTEGRATIONS WITH THE SYSTEMS WE'RE USING?

Compile a list of the key systems that need to integrate with the CMS. That list may include asset management, authentication, marketing automation, CRM and even Microsoft SharePoint.

Next, determine whether the CMS vendors provide built-in integrations to those systems. With a built-in integration, you enter key attributes from your connected system, and the CMS handles the connection. No custom development or coding is required.



The IT Team wants to make the right decision for the long term.

4

CAN BUSINESS USERS INDEPENDENTLY MANAGE CONTENT?

A CMS should be intuitive for business users, while giving them the capabilities to meet their needs. When business users can use the CMS independently, they'll feel more in control of their deliverables, while your IT team will spend less time supporting CMS authors.

IS THE CMS SECURE?

Whether your CMS is used to manage a private intranet or a public website, you need to prevent unauthorized users from accessing or compromising your site.

CMS software that is unsecure provides more opportunities for hackers or malicious

users to gain unauthorized access to your site. Have your team review the vendor's track record, including security vulnerabilities and their frequency.

DOES THE CMS PROVIDE HIGH PERFORMANCE?

47% of consumers expect a web page to load in 2 seconds or less, while 40% of people abandon a website that takes more than 3 seconds to load. If your CMS slows down page load times, it may not be worthy of your final selection.

Have your team assess what the CMS provides to boost performance, e.g. webfarms for balancing load and page caching for serving content to visitors more efficiently.



5

Important Considerations for Business Users

Business users comprise the majority of the CMS authoring team. For the most part, business users are non-technical staff with limited experience in HTML, CSS and Javascript. Business users want a CMS that enables their website campaigns and initiatives.

HOW USER-FRIENDLY IS THE CONTENT AND PAGE EDITING EXPERIENCE?

The CMS must provide a simple, intuitive content creation and page editing experience for marketers and designers. Business users need to be “masters of their own destiny.” Rather than requesting help from IT, the CMS must enable them to directly manage content updates and create and launch new campaigns.

CAN WE GROW THE CONTENT TEAM WHILE RETAINING BRAND STANDARDS AND QUALITY CONTROL?

As the amount of site content grows, so does the associated team. Your team may include multiple writers, editors, graphic designers, and project managers. The team will include full-time employees, contractors, freelancers and interns.

You’ll want to ensure that each user has their own account with customized permissions. The CMS should enforce the sections of the site each user can access, along with the permitted actions (e.g. add, delete, update, copy, import, export, etc.).

In addition, you’ll want to evaluate whether the CMS supports your desired workflow for reviewing and approving site updates. For instance, if you’ll need nested or multi-stage workflow approvals, be sure the selected CMS supports that.



For business users, the right CMS is an enabler, not an inhibitor.

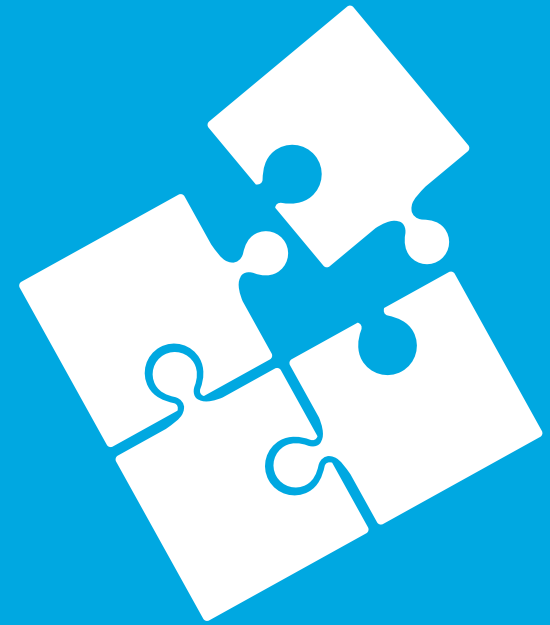
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DOES THE CMS INTEGRATE WITH MY MARKETING TECHNOLOGY (MARTECH) STACK?

A CMS is considered the foundation of a marketing technology stack. Since you're evaluating CMS systems, it's critical that your new CMS integrate seamlessly with your martech stack.

The martech stack includes CRM, marketing automation, digital asset management, performance optimization tools (e.g. A/B testing), webinar platforms, video hosting platforms and more.

Evaluate the CMS' built-in integrations to the components of your martech stack. Built-in integrations will save your organization time, since no custom development is needed from IT.



Determining Your Final Selection

In the previous sections of this eBook, we outlined the essential questions for both IT and business users. Hopefully, the shortlisted CMS vendors helped you form detailed answers to these questions.

While your organization may have a particular methodology you use to evaluate technology solutions, we present a few techniques you can use to make a final decision. These techniques can be combined, or adopted individually.

1) FINAL ROUND OF VENDOR DEMOS, WITH SCOPE DICTATED BY YOU

This approach helps you select the CMS best suited for the functional needs of your organization. The first step is to identify and document the most common CMS usage scenarios (Table 1).



Make the final round of demos as focused and prescriptive as possible.

Table 1

Usage Scenario	Related Group	Detailed Steps	Success Measures
Updating product pages	Marketing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Find the specified product entry in the CMS 2. Update the product's description 3. Update the product's version number 4. Replace 2-3 images 5. Publish 	Each Marketing team member can complete this activity without prior training
Managing user permissions	IT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create 5 new users 2. Assign each user to a role 3. Verify the user can only update the pages associated with that role. 	Permissions are properly enforced. IT spends no more than 15% of their time managing permissions.

Note: We list two sample usage scenarios. You should document the 5-10 scenarios that are most essential to your organization.

These usage scenarios offer detailed explanations of the common tasks each user (or team) will attempt to accomplish in the CMS. Don't list every single usage scenario in your organization; instead, distill the list down to the 5-10 that are most essential.

Next, contact each shortlisted vendor to schedule a live product demo. Provide them with your documented usage scenarios, but remove the "Success Measures."

Confirm with each vendor that the demo will exclusively focus on your usage scenarios, then ask if they need clarification on the scope or goals of the demo.

Vendors who decline to participate in this demo, or who can only demonstrate a partial set of your usage scenarios may be candidates for eliminating from consideration.

Ensure that one member from each "Related Group" (see table above) participates in the demo, so they can ask questions when their usage scenario is covered. At the conclusion of demo, ask each group to rate how likely the vendor product will deliver on the documented success measures.

Once all demonstrations have been completed, you should have a "functional capabilities winner," from which you can consider related factors, such as pricing, customer support and more.

2) HANDS-ON, SIDE-BY-SIDE REVIEW OF EACH SOLUTION

This approach is focused on finding the "best fit" CMS for your business users. Similar to Step 1 [above], identify the 5-10 essential usage scenarios. These are the most common activities that CMS authors do on a daily or weekly basis.

Next, request online or on-premises trials with the CMS vendors. You may already have set up trials with each vendor as part of developing the shortlist. Configure each trial as if you were preparing the CMS for roll-out within your organization. As closely as possible, have the set-up be consistent across CMS systems.

Next, identify a participant group of 5-10 users, with equal representation across functions and teams. Sit them down at a workstation and give them the task of

implementing the documented usage scenarios.

Afterwards, interview participants for their feedback. In addition, observe how they interacted with the CMS and take notes. Use this exercise as a qualitative way to assess the usability of your shortlisted CMS systems.

Once this usability exercise has completed, you should have a “functional usability winner,” from which you can consider related factors to make you final decision.

3) WEIGHTED RANKING MATRIX

With your buying committee representing assorted priorities, interests and goals, the weighted ranking matrix helps identify a potential winner based on the broadest set of criteria (Table 2).

This technique provides each vendor with a weighted score, determined by the buying committee. You can now decide whether to combine these scores with other criteria, or to select the vendor with the highest score.

Table 2 - Sample Matrix

Criteria	Deciding Group	Rating (1-5)	Weight (1-3)	Score
Meets business requirements	Marketing	4	3	12
Compliance with IT mandates and interoperates with IT systems	IT	3	3	9
Quality of vendor's customer support	Marketing	3	2	6
Pricing and cost	Marketing and IT	3	3	9
Implementation and set-up time	Marketing and IT	2	3	6
Vendor's vision, strategy and product roadmap	Marketing	5	2	10
TOTAL				52

Notes:

“Rating” is a qualitative measure as judged by the “Deciding Group.” 1 indicates the lowest association with the listed criteria, while 5 is the highest.

“Weight” is also judged by the “Deciding Group” and refers to the importance of the criteria. A weight of 3 reflects a high importance, while a weight of 1 means low importance.

“Total” refers to the sum of the individual weighted scores.

Conclusion

Finding the right software solution can be a long, laborious process. It's often tempting to buy the most expensive solution to ensure that you're covering all of your bases.

However, buying an expensive solution just because it offers every feature presents a variety of challenges with respect to use and implementation.

In an interview with CMSWire, Lionbridge chief marketing technologist Seth Gottlieb noted that:

"(Overbuying) is worse than just wasting money buying functionality that you don't need... (it) adds complexity to the implementation that increases the risk of failure."¹

Gottlieb says that buying unnecessarily complex solutions makes it more difficult for users to learn the new system. Your IT staff may also need to spend a significant amount of time training business users and helping them with the CMS.

Hopefully, this eBook provided you with the right questions to ask IT and business users, along with techniques to arrive at your final decision. The selection of a CMS should be the beginning of a long-term relationship. So take the time and effort to make the right decision.

The future awaits.



The future awaits.

¹ <http://www.cmswire.com/cms/web-cms/7-rules-for-selecting-the-right-content-management-system-023026.php>



About DNN

DNN provides a suite of solutions for creating rich, rewarding online experiences for customers, partners and employees. DNN products and technology are the foundation for 750,000+ websites worldwide. In addition to our commercial CMS and social community solutions, DNN is the steward of the DNN Platform Open Source Project.

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