

A BUYER'S GUIDE TO WEB CMS



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WHITE PAPER

A Web CMS is Good for Business

A Web CMS makes it easier for you to create, manage and maintain your website content. Let's consider important reasons to manage your website using a Web CMS:

- ✔ **Enable business users to manage and update site content.** A Web CMS helps you build and manage your website efficiently. With a user interface that's simple for non-technical users, website updates are a cinch.
- ✔ **Protect your site against unauthorized or unintentional changes.** A Web CMS includes security features that make your website less vulnerable to password compromises and security attacks. In addition, you can assign roles across the organization to segment who can update particular sections of your site. This prevents unauthorized or unintentional content updates.
- ✔ **Make your site run faster.** A Web CMS can improve the performance of your website by optimizing the way pages load and by using web farms to distribute requests to a pool of web servers.
- ✔ **Drive more organic traffic to your site.** By providing tools for automated re-directs and advanced URL management, a Web CMS can drive more traffic to your website from search engines.

Now that we've covered some of the benefits of a CMS, let's consider how you can choose one that's best suited to your organization's needs.

How to Choose a Web CMS

Choosing a Web CMS is a big decision. It's critical to look for and understand the essential features that will address your business needs now and in the future.

This guide details what to expect from a content management system, beginning with baseline features and progressing to advanced features. Use this guide to make a more informed Web CMS selection.



Web CMS Essential Features

Whether you need a brand new content management system, a more scalable system for your growing business, or are replacing a solution that no longer meets your needs, be on the lookout for these seven essential features:

- 1. Ease of use.** A Web CMS should offer design flexibility and allow content contributors to manage and customize the look and feel of pages, without specialized programming or design expertise.
- 2. Mobile readiness.** It's a fact of life: visitors are viewing your website from a mobile device. Select a Web CMS that provides tools and capabilities to create valuable experiences for mobile users.
- 3. Granular permissions and workflow.** Creating, managing, editing, and auditing content is a continual process, so any Web CMS should provide several, easy-to-use content management capabilities, such as creating workflows for content staging and approvals.
- 4. Easy-to-use templates.** A CMS should offer "templating" capabilities so you can create and easily duplicate content, as well as structural details such as page layouts.
- 5. Scalability and performance.** Your Web CMS needs to load pages quickly and maintain high performance as the site grows.
- 6. Strong SEO and on-site search.** Look for Search Engine Optimization (SEO) tools, so that your pages rank well in search engines, and a good site search feature to help visitors find what they're looking for.
- 7. Flexible delivery options.** Select a Web CMS that can be deployed on on-premises or in the cloud.
- 8. Extensive service and support.** Carefully evaluate the vendor's service and support options to ensure that they meet your needs.

Let's take a closer look at each.

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1 Ease of Use

If trained consultants are required to deploy your Web CMS, that's a bad sign. Devoting extra resources to installing and managing a CMS is not practical. It's important to choose a CMS that your team can deploy, configure, manage and maintain.

CMS CHECKLIST:

- Intuitive for non-technical users
- Compatible with widely installed web browsers
- Works with multiple operating systems
- Easy to make design changes across website
- Supports many types of devices

Your CMS should provide an intuitive interface that lets non-technical users perform basic tasks, such as uploading new content or rearranging the structure of a web page, without the need for IT intervention. A CMS must be compatible with the most popular web browsers, including Internet

Explorer, Safari, Firefox, and Chrome, and work equally well on any computer operating system.

Organizing and managing the hierarchy of site content ought to be straightforward, allowing you to build and arrange the navigational structure easily, with minimal technical knowledge.

Look for a Web CMS that provides different "skins" (also known as "themes") that can get you up and running quickly. These themes allow you to easily customize a site's look by altering colors, fonts and other visual elements, and distribute changes across the entire site without having to dig into code. A good CMS will let you easily re-use content for different devices, from laptops and desktops to smartphones and tablets.

CMS CHECKLIST:

- Granular permissions for individuals, departments, and job roles
- Customizable workflows to ensure proper vetting of content
- Easy distribution of content across multiple websites
- Support for version compare, versioning, and audits
- Content can be distributed through RSS and XML feeds



2 Mobile Readiness

There are 1.2 billion mobile web users. Do you know how your website looks on mobile devices? If your Web CMS does not provide mobile readiness, then your site will not be appealing to mobile visitors.

A Web CMS should automatically detect the characteristics of thousands of mobile devices and tailor the design and content for the optimal viewing experience. It's helpful to have out-of-the-box mobile templates to create pages customized to particular viewing dimensions.

Finally, to aid in the creation of mobile-optimized pages, the Web CMS should provide a mobile previewer. The previewer shows how pages look across mobile platforms, including Android, Apple iOS and Windows Phone.



3 Granular Permissions and Workflow

Look for a Web CMS that provides clear, easy-to-use features that provide tight controls over content creation, review, editing and deletion.

Your Web CMS should enable you to manage role-based permissions on specific sections of a site. Access control lists can be used to provide granular controls that will determine which individuals and departments can add, modify, and delete content.

For example, the VP Sales could be granted permission add, edit or delete sales-related pages. A sales intern, on the other hand, would be restricted to editing descriptions or adding images to a product catalog.

Workflows based on established policies ensure that content is properly vetted before it is published.

Workflow should include easily-conducted content audits. In addition, look for versioning capabilities, which keeps older versions of documents on file after they are updated, along with version-compare capabilities that show what changed between different versions of a document.

4 Easy-to-Use Templates

Your Web CMS should provide easy-to-use templates. Templates can perform two vital, time-saving functions.

First, templates can duplicate the layout of a page in order to create another page. If you have 20 or 30 pages covering different products, you can use a single template to create a “master” page that is easily repeated across the site. Perhaps you have a company with more than

one branch, and each branch needs its own site; page templates can be created, giving each branch a distinct look and feel.

Second, templates can be used for particular sections of the site. For example, a company might create a press release template that includes standard fields for contact information, but also provides fields where users can add the content of the press release.

CMS CHECKLIST:

- Page templates that can be easily duplicated and distributed
- Website templates for quickly creating multiple websites with the same look and feel
- Templates that can be used by non-technical employees to frequently add or modify content

5 Scalability & Performance

Low-end content management systems often fail to scale with an organization’s growth. As you grow your site traffic, can your CMS keep up? A CMS should easily handle growing demands for large volumes of pages, many different sub-sites, multiple URLs, and even different domains.

Consider Web CMS vendors that support web farms, a feature that routes incoming requests across

two or more web servers. Web farms balance website traffic across multiple servers, so that a single server does not become a performance bottleneck. By adding more servers to your web farm, you can scale as your site traffic grows.

CMS CHECKLIST:

- CMS should be easily scaled to handle additional pages, URLs, domains, sub-sites
- Support for web farms for performance and scalability
- Easily obtained licenses to add servers for large-scale growth

6 Strong SEO & On-Site Search

Look for strong Search Engine Optimization (SEO) features. You should be able to quickly define characteristics such as page titles, descriptions, keywords, and URLs. Also consider vendors that provide advanced URL management: the ability for authorized users to manage application-wide settings that control the format of URLs for all pages and sites, including custom page re-directs.

Your CMS should provide strong on-site search via built-in search capabilities. External services (for search) often require additional licensing costs and may have issues

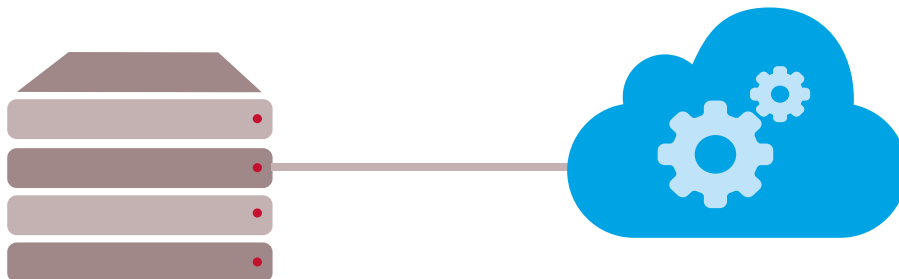
indexing all of your site content. Look for local language search, flexible end-user search options, search results preview, search results filtering and highlighted results in search results pages.



7 Flexible Delivery Options

Your Web CMS software should be available on-premises or on-demand. With on-demand, you need not concern yourself with software, servers, networking hardware and bandwidth. Your website is hosted "in the cloud," in the same way that Salesforce provides Customer Relationship Management (CRM).

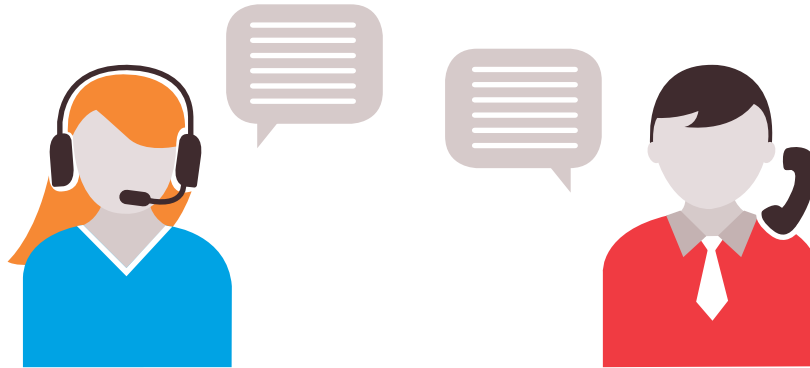
Your business requirements will dictate whether to subscribe to an on-premises or on-demand model. Be sure that your Web CMS vendor provides the delivery option that's best for you.



8 Extensive Service & Support

There will be times that you'll need external support for your Web CMS. Your CMS vendor should provide a variety of support options. This could start with an active user community where you can find free information. Next, look for fee-based services for business-critical or time-sensitive issues. Look for support options that cover technical problem solving, installations and upgrades, and supporting developers and designers. Additionally, evaluate training options, including online tutorials, on-site training and classroom training.

A vendor's partner ecosystem can be incredibly valuable. Easy access to partner networks can provide services that can be hard to implement internally. Finally, look for the right cultural fit between your organization and your Web CMS solutions provider. If you're a 20-person company, then your culture may not mesh well with a CMS vendor that has tens of thousands of employees.



Conclusion

Building and maintaining a strong web presence is critical. It's essential to pick a strong Web CMS that will provide the power and flexibility to easily manage content, design compelling sites and pages, and adapt to changing market conditions.

While free or low-cost CMS solutions might be tempting in the short run, consider the long-term benefits of a fully supported, commercial CMS.

When evaluating your CMS choices, look for the value of the solution and the reputation of the vendor, keeping in mind that you are selecting a core business asset that will bolster your business today, while supporting new opportunities in the future.

CMS CHECKLIST:

- User communities for free advice
- For-fee support from CMS vendor
- Varieties of training, including online and on-site options
- Third-party partner ecosystem



About DNN Software

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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