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Content Management System (CMS)

A content management system (CMS) is critical to the success of almost every website and intranet, and yet many organisations are not familiar with this technology.

You have a website. It has grown organically over time, and while it is very useful, it is far from perfect.

Much of the content is out-of-date or inaccurate, it's hard to find things, updating the site is complex, and the appearance is becoming dated.

Worse yet, you've lost track of all the pages on the site, and by having all the changes made by your skilled webmaster, the updates are piling up in their in-tray.

If this sounds grim, you are not alone. In fact, it's the natural by-product of maintaining a site using manual tools such as Dreamweaver or FrontPage.

Thankfully, these problems are what a content management system is specifically designed to solve.

What is CMS?

A content management system (CMS) supports the creation, management, distribution, publishing, and discovery of corporate information.

It covers the complete lifecycle of the pages on your site, from providing simple tools to create the content, through to publishing, and finally to archiving.

It also provides the ability to manage the structure of the site, the appearance of the published pages, and the navigation provided to the users.

Note that we are focusing on the most common use of a CMS: to manage web content. In some circles, these systems are therefore called web management systems (WMS).

Content management systems can be much broader than this, but we won't touch upon these aspects in this article.

What are the benefits of having CMS?

There are a wide range of business benefits that can be obtained by implementing a CMS, including:

- streamlined authoring process
- faster turnaround time for new pages and changes
- greater consistency
- improved site navigation
- increased site flexibility
- support for decentralised authoring
- increased security
- reduced duplication of information
- greater capacity for growth
- reduced site maintenance costs

Beyond these, the greatest benefit the CMS can provide is to support your business goals and strategies.

How does it work? Is it easy?

At the front of a content management system is an easy-to-use authoring environment, designed to work like Microsoft Word. This provides a non-technical way of creating new pages or updating content, without having to know any HTML (code).

The CMS also allows you to manage the structure of the site. That is, where the pages go, and how they are linked together.

Almost all content management systems now provide a web-based authoring environment, which further simplifies implementation, and allows content updating to be done remotely.

It is this authoring tool that is the key to the success of the CMS. By providing a simple mechanism for maintaining the site, authoring can be devolved out into the business itself. For example, your marketing manager maintains the press release section, while your product manager keeps the catalogue up to date.

You're in control

Once the final content is in the CMS, it can then be previewed before being published out to the website.

Content management systems boast powerful publishing engines which allow the appearance and page layout of the site to be applied automatically during publishing.

Of course, every site looks different, so the CMS lets the graphic designers and web developers specify the appearance that is applied by the system.

These publishing capabilities ensure that the pages are consistent across the entire site, and enable a very high standard of appearance.

This also allows the authors to concentrate on writing the content, by leaving the look of the site entirely to the CMS.

Evaluate your options

This article has presented a general overview of typical content management system capabilities, and how they can be used to benefit your business.

In the marketplace at present, there are literally hundreds of content management systems, all having different capabilities and strengths. Develop and Promote look at your requirements and match them to the systems for you.

Our single best piece of advice: take the time to determine your business requirements, and then comprehensively evaluate the options with a professional web designer like Develop and Promote Ltd.

Consider the cost and time taken for your web designer to amend your site and the ROI from having a CMS?

How can we help?

We are offering to convert **your web site into a CMS for £250 which includes training** on how to update the web site yourself.

Offer ends 8 January 2010.

Call Darren at Develop and Promote on 01522 822520 to get some help.