

A **Buyer's Guide** by Percussion Software, Inc.



**BUYER'S GUIDE**

Selecting the Right Web Content  
Management System

*Understanding the Web Content Management  
Landscape and Planning for Implementation Success*

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# Executive Summary

Websites used to play a supplemental role in a marketing toolkit. Unless you ran an e-commerce website, your site probably wasn't a major driver of leads or sales, until one day you realized it had to be. With many websites still owned by IT, marketers have had limited ownership and ability to improve this critical function.

The business world becomes more digital every day. New technologies launch each year, introducing software, platforms, and gadgets that reshape your world. Your customers are always online, even when on the go, with mobile devices that rarely leave their hands.

Accommodating the changing expectations of your audience and the demands of a digital business landscape requires creating engaging web experiences that also convert visitors into leads and customers. Your website needs to deliver rich, valuable, and frequent content that ranks highly in search, is an effective sales tool, and looks great on any device.

## What to Expect From This Buyer's Guide

This buyer's guide will help you define the purpose and requirements of a web content management system for your website, whether you are a first-time buyer or researching a replacement.

The information included will help you assess your web content management needs now and in the future. You will be better prepared to choose the CMS best suited to the needs of your organization, within the time, budgetary, and other resource constraints that will inevitably steer your decision.

## Who This Guide Is For

This guide is designed to assist your company website's stakeholders and key decision makers ranging from web-specific staff such as web content managers, web project managers, website and website administrators, to marketing and communications directors and executive-level staff.

Gartner Research recommends assessing WCM vendors according to their ability to execute projects well, and the completeness of their vision around the product they deliver.

## The Future Is Mobile, and The Future Is Now

*In our ongoing research, we come across findings that are likely to shape the future of the web. Here are some of the most important recent statistics:*

- » 1 billion smartphones were shipped in 2013—that's one Internet-enabled phone for every 7 people on the planet
- » Mobile devices accounted for 55% of Internet usage in the United States in January 2014, outpacing desktop usage for the first time ever.
- » 71% of U.S. adults use smartphones to shop online

# What Your Content and CMS Should Do for You

As a lead-generation and sales tool, your website should improve your ability to capture and review data, and allow you to gain insights that can drive strategic web decisions. It should also be a source of relevant, engaging, and fresh content that will help prospective customers connect their needs to your products and services.

Your CMS should remove unnecessary barriers between creating effective content and publishing and distributing it. It should also improve your ability to assess the strength of that content and make it easy for that content to go where your audience can find it: not just your website, but social networks, content feeds, and their mobile devices.

Ask the following effectiveness and engagement questions when reviewing potential content management systems.

## Will your CMS:

- » Improve your SEO and Google search results ranking by enabling easy access to on-page meta tagging and titling, and by providing auditing tools that tell you what needs improvement?
- » Increase visitor engagement with quality content, speedy performance, and optimized display regardless of what device they're using?
- » Increase your ability to demonstrate the return on investment (ROI) of your content with built in tools to measure engagement, or thorough easy integration of Google Analytics as well as CRM and marketing automation solutions?
- » Increase your ability to engage more users with your content and convert them from reading to taking action with clicks and form submissions by allowing easy reconfiguration of templates and page layouts with calls to action and related content?
- » Encourage sharing of your content through easy integration of social sharing tools and structuring your content to help it travel well?
- » Enable subscriptions to your content through RSS feeds?
- » Improve your ability to seek dialogue and feedback through native commenting and polling tools?
- » Decrease the improper use of files by including a permission-based file management tool?
- » Reduce the reliance on advanced technical skills for basic activities such as uploading files or changing style sheets?
- » Increase the value of each piece of content by allowing reusability across multiple pages and websites?

## White Paper: The ROI of Web Content Management

*Effective websites are fueled by engaging content, and powered by WCM systems that make creating that content fast and easy. The right WCM can reduce the cost of your current website-based marketing efforts while increasing their return on investment.*

**Download the white paper.**

# How Your CMS Should Help You Produce Better Content Faster

If your website has been around for some time in one form or another, you might not see an obvious content problem. You have dozens, hundreds, maybe even thousands of pages of content. Although this content has been indexed by Google, you can't stop at what you already have.

Google's newest algorithm update, Panda, heavily favors "fresh" content. Content marketing and engagement should be an ongoing effort, consistently applied over time. For your website, that means having a blog is an absolute must as a hub for new content, and it also means that all other content should be reviewed and refreshed on a regular basis for accuracy, and to allow improvements based on research, feedback, and visitor behavior.

Your CMS should lower the barrier of entry for content contributors to increase the size of your content team and decrease the level of technical skills required to manage your content. See if you can answer the following questions when reviewing CMS products.

## Will your CMS:

- » Enable you to add more content contributors thanks to an interface that is easy to learn and easy to use for the average user on your team?
- » Allow for a growing contributor base by separating content creation from site design?
- » Ensure contributors have more time to craft content and strategy due to decreasing the time needed to update and publish pages?
- » Decrease the time required to update content in multiple locations through the ability to reuse content and create feeds of related content or files?
- » Reduce the time and skills required to make new pages by decreasing work involved in creating templates and updating designs?
- » Free up your IT resources for other strategic projects by enabling users with only HTML and CSS skills to master most features?

## Closing the Engagement-Conversion Gap with Content Marketing

*Leading organizations are 45% more likely than followers to give marketing the ability to post content without the need for IT support. They are also more likely to capture engagement in a marketing automation platform and use it to grade leads (56% vs. 32%).*

*Engagement means interest, and interest in your content signals a need, and creates the potential for qualifying which of your online leads are most likely to convert.*

# How Your CMS Should Help Your Website Adapt

Website redesigns and CMS implementations are a major investment. To keep your company from having to re-invest a lot of time and money every couple years, you can choose a CMS that will allow you to grow over time, adding not just content, but functionality, and also permitting design changes without additional cost.

Even when it's not the longest part of a web project, content migration is often the most arduous one. This is most often a manual process that can be completed by your users and staff, or by the CMS vendor, or by a third party.

Even if your migration to a new CMS does not involve a website redesign, you will likely want to preserve most or all of your content. Consider the following when assessing a CMS platform's options for content migration and adaptability over time.

## Will your CMS:

- » Decrease resistance to adoption by performing well across all browsers and operating systems?
- » Reduce the cost and difficulty of optimizing your website for mobile devices by including responsive templates?
- » Include support for multiple websites and enable your website to grow?
- » Remove roadblocks to future redesigns by giving you full access to your CSS and templates?
- » Allow for enhanced functionality by partnering with complementary apps?
- » Reduce the time required for redesigning templates or pages by including an intuitive, easy-to-use interface for design management?
- » Reduce future development need by enabling you to configure some functionality and layout within the user interface with basic HTML, CSS and JavaScript skills?
- » Reduce the difficulty of future redesigns or migrations by enabling content to remain separate from design and saved independently from pages when needed?
- » Reduce inconsistent content output by allowing you to configure a reusable way of structuring some kinds of content (contact information, for example)?
- » Reduce the difficulty of implementing responsive templates and designs by allowing you to preview your website across multiple device types?
- » Reduce the barriers to making updates by being entirely browser-based and compatible across all web browsers?
- » Increase your ability to alter website functionality by allowing easy integration of third-party code?
- » Decrease the effort required in a content migration through dedicated smart migration tools?

## 8 Ways to Make Your Website Mobile First

*With mobile web usage overtaking desktop usage for the first time ever in 2014, there's no going back to designing for desktops and figuring out mobile later.*

*Although best practices for mobile are still being defined, responsive design is beginning to dominate as the best solution for a mobile-friendly web experience.*

**Read the blog post.**

# How Your CMS Should Improve Content and User Governance

The purpose of a content management platform is to allow multiple users to create and manage content on a website, keeping it frequently updated and accurate, while keeping the design integrity of the website intact. It should also enable the website's administrator or designer to apply global design and style changes without having to interact with individual pages.

For organizations that used to produce and distribute most of their content offline, managing digital content introduces new layers of challenges to the ones that already exist: accuracy, protocols and workflows, timeliness, and ability to reach the right audience while keeping information away from the wrong ones.

## Will your CMS:

- » Keep the integrity of your design and navigation safely insulated by assigning role-based permissions and access to certain features?
- » Prevent accidental and unauthorized changes to pages or files by including permissions that determine which users have access to what content and features?
- » Reduce the number of errors to content by allowing oversight through defined editorial and publishing workflows?
- » Reduce publishing and updating bottlenecks by allowing more users to own their content and distributing publishing rights to selected administrators?
- » Reduce the number of published errors by allowing users to preview pages prior to publishing?
- » Improve content effectiveness through the ability to audit its performance?
- » Prevent accidental content loss through the ability to roll back changes?
- » Protect you from security threats and malicious attacks?

A true WCM solution doesn't stop at the ability to push content to the web. IBM cites workflows as an integral part of WCM, vital to managing multiple users and protecting website content.

## Don't Save Content Governance for Last

*Digital governance expert Lisa Welchman recommends developing digital policies that provide a safety net for your institution and content contributors.*

*Defining your process early on makes it easier to assign responsibilities for goals and prepare for worst case scenarios.*

**Read about Lisa's 7 tips for defining digital governance.**

# What Your CMS Vendor Should Deliver

Different WCM vendors offer different pricing models. Every paid content management solution comes with a base license fee, and typically an annual contract. Although there are open-source platforms available seemingly at no cost, their true cost is often not readily apparent.

Your CMS vendor should be a partner fully invested in your website's success. Whatever the initial price tag on a WCM platform, you should hold the vendor accountable for added value and commitment to your goals.

Consider the following when assessing the cost and value of a potential CMS.

## Will your CMS vendor:

- » Offer free resources and user communities?
- » Ensure a successful implementation through coaching or training of any kind, or offer implementation as a service?
- » Enhance your content management experience by connecting you to other users and relevant resources?
- » Decrease likely security and stability risks by adhering to industry standards?
- » Increase your knowledge base through documentation, publications, and thought leadership on content marketing, content management, web design, and digital best practices?
- » Enable you to take advantage of a robust partnership ecosystem in design, digital strategy, personalization, and marketing automation?
- » Increase your ability to budget adequate resources by providing transparent pricing models and educating your about the true cost of the implementation?
- » Decrease the cost, length, and complexity of redesign and implementation projects by recommending trusted partners?
- » Offer additional service and support tiers to meet your organization's unique needs?

## Open Source Requires an Open Checkbook

*Open source is an attractive option for many organizations due to the lack of licensing costs and large support communities that exist for these platforms.*

*Once adopted, an open source CMS will still require ongoing spending for training, additional development work, dedicated IT staff or contractor, major upgrades, customization, and the risks associated with poor security.*

**Read about the true cost of open source to better understand what's involved.**

## WHAT MAKES PERCUSSION CMS DIFFERENT

Web content management provider Percussion Software is one of the few commercial WCM platforms based on J2EE, which makes it highly scalable. A little over two years ago Percussion embarked on a complete makeover of its management team and its product family.

What makes Percussion hot is its new approach that lets enterprises import website design and content with very little services or HTML work. Import tools often cannot recognize a design theme, and this is what separates Percussion from others. This import capability, combined with Percussion's easy-to-use CMS, will save marketing departments and webmasters a lot of time.

*Hot Vendors in Content Management And Collaboration, 2013*  
**Aragon Research**

# Planning for Your CMS Proposal

Preparing to make your case for your chosen CMS solution is a lot of work. Asking the right questions and using this guide will save you a lot of time and effort.

Remember that the better you define your goals and desired outcomes, the better positioned you are to judge whether a WCM is well-suited to reaching them.

As you adapt these materials for your needs and company, keep in mind that you will still need to provide relevant and timely information specific to your project requirements.

## While preparing your case:

- » Understand your organization's primary strategic goals and how your website can help achieve them
- » Know your audience and understand which information they will best respond to: Lead generation? Sales growth? Cost? Efficiency? Focus on those drivers when explaining the value of WCM
- » Prepare case studies and white papers relevant to your industry
- » Articulate the intangible but positive impact: user engagement and productivity, for example
- » Use the included assessment tool to demonstrate why your preferred choice is the best solution
- » Check your vendor's customer references ahead of time
- » Be prepared to explain the implementation process, speaking to potential timelines and what your institution will be responsible for
- » Learn about the buying process
- » Define who in your organization has the authority to approve a CMS purchase

## Case Studies

*Seeing how other organizations approached their CMS implementations is a great place to source best practices and inspiration for your next project.*

**Read about how Percussion customers across various industries completed their major web projects.**

## About Percussion Software

*Percussion Software's award-winning web content management system is used by higher education, government agencies, and businesses to create effective websites and engaging content.*

*Marketers use Percussion CMS to create, publish, and share content that drives web traffic, engages visitors, and looks great on any device. Percussion customers love our unique coaching program, drag-and-drop editing, built-in blogs, responsive mobile templates, SEO tools, and fast migration with LiveFirst.*

*Launch your website in days instead of months. Take ownership of content, design, and go live dates because Percussion CMS is a product, not a platform. Leading customers include Sunoco, the U.S. Social Security Administration, Norfolk State University, Ceridian, and Cornell University.*

To learn more, visit [www.percussion.com](http://www.percussion.com).

# Comparison Worksheet

	Considerations	CMS 1	CMS 2	CMS 3
CMS and Content Effectiveness	Improve SEO and ability to measure effectiveness			
	Increase visitor engagement and response			
	Enable dialogue and feedback from visitors			
	Reduce technical skills required to contribute			
	Increase shareability of content			
Content Production Ease and Speed	Decrease time required to update and publish pages			
	Increase content reusability			
	Reduce reliance on IT			
	Separate content and design			
	Increase number of contributors through easy to learn interface			
Content and User Governance	Prevent unauthorized updates			
	Decrease number of published errors			
	Decentralize content ownership			
	Improve editorial oversight			
	Protect files and content with permission-based access			
Ability to Extend and Adapt	Allow full control over CSS and design			
	Make design updates easier and less technical			
	Reuse design elements and structured content			
	Easily integrate third-party code			
	Eliminate custom development			
CMS Vendor Expectations	Provide coaching or training			
	Offer user resources and community			
	Provide transparent pricing			
	Increase security and stability			
	Provide resources for planning and reducing costs			