



10 Questions To Ask When Selecting a Website Content Management System (CMS) Package

EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

A Very Quick Overview - If you just want a quick taste of the top 10 CMS selection questions to consider, read on...

1. Is it WYSIWYG?

You need to be able to see how it will look on the web, so text entry boxes just don't hack it anymore.

2. Do I have to pay for it?

'Free' systems are never free. Commercial organisations need to earn money so watch out for the hidden costs.

3. How easy is it to use?

Don't just read the marketing literature, check it out - easy is a comparative term.

4. "If you build it they will come" Or SEO?

OK so it can put you in control but make sure it understands search engines requirements so you get promotion?

5. Can you analyse your CMS success?

Make sure you're able to analyse your visitors' interest so you can change the website to meet their demands.

6. Is it Flexible?

Make sure the CMS works for you and that you don't have to change your ideas to fit. And get a list of add-ons that are available now and planned.

7. Was it designed for you?

Make sure it can do what you need it to do in your market

for your customers.

8. What about Social Media & Platforms?

Social media and mobile browsers are now and growing. Test out sites created to make sure they work and feed.

9. Can it work with my team?

Don't forget the way you work is your way and your team interact in a set way, make sure the CMS supports your team operation and management.

10. "Ah, yes, but can it...?"

Finally, you won't have thought of everything, so make sure the CMS can be tailored/modified to whatever quirky thing you think of!

OK, that's the executive flying visit to the 10 questions. But if you're serious about CMS then take the time to read more detail on the following pages and enjoy - remember a CMS is for life - or at least it should be, if it can be expanded as your business grows!

If you'd like to discuss CMS in more detail please contact the author: Mark Robson on 0845 643 6181 or email him at markr@insightgroup.co.uk

“Over 60% of web sites are out of date and don't generate business leads.”*

Common reasons given by companies include:

- updating speed
- cost to create
- cost to update
- technical skill

* Advisors Trusted Advisor Survey
Evaluating 7 Key Catalysts to Business Growth, September 2009

10 QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN SELECTING A WEBSITE CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (CMS) PACKAGE

Your web site is one of the most important marketing and communication tools that you have in your marketing portfolio. Therefore it is important, no, crucial, that you can manage it yourself, easily and quickly; to have the ability to effortlessly change your marketing message to the Internet world. In essence to control your corporate brand and react and be seen to react to market change and maximise your marketing potential. That's why so many people are now implementing a web Content Managed System (CMS) so they can update their web content just as easily as documents in Microsoft® Office™.

When you select a CMS system it has to be right for you. In this document we're not aiming to make the selection for you because so much comes down to how you work, what you like and don't like and what your company requires you to use.

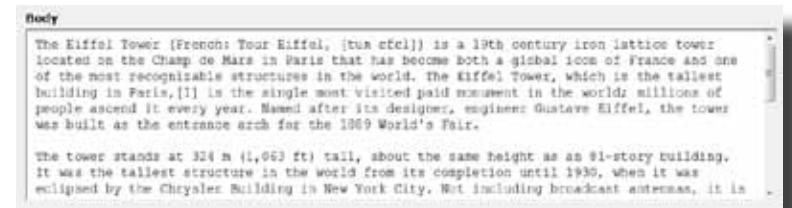
There are key questions you need to ask of any CMS system to ensure it really is going to make your life easier, cheaper and put you in control of your company's biggest marketing asset. We outline the top 10 questions here that you need to consider to select the right CMS for you and your company.

1. Is it WYSIWYG?

In all honesty, very few are 100% WYSIWYG, basically because the web and its inherent HTML system make editing in true WYSIWYG tough to implement. What you need to ask is: **'Does it have a separate edit and display function?'**

Good CMS systems will work on having an editor that provides WYSIWYG functionality so that you can see the page styles (text, colour, formatting etc) and a separate viewing mode will enable you to see exactly how that looks when displayed in a browser.

Steer clear of any that don't have this or any that provide 'entry boxes' for inputting text and images:



Commonly these entry boxes are designed to take what you enter and place in a predefined position on a web page. Great from a programmer's functionality point of view (it makes it easier to build the system) but terrible from a user's view, because the entry boxes always come with a set of rules and limitations which you often don't find out until you have entered the contents and then and only then do you discover that the CMS has cut off the last sentence

In a recent survey carried out by Econsultancy they found that the majority of companies (60%) use proprietary software as their CMS.

35% are spending at least £10,000 a year on their CMS licence, and this goes up to 70% for the largest organisations (more than 1,000 employees). Almost half (48%) of the largest companies are spending more than £50,000 annually and 5% are paying more than £1m.

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or the bottom of the image because it 'doesn't follow the rules'. Commonly CMS systems with such tight rules can be identified easily, because they will have a series of 'data entry' areas which take text in a standard font such as courier and place images 'in the box' ready to be positioned in a template after you click submit.

2. Do I have to pay for it?

There are literally hundreds of CMS systems on the market ranging from free (and remember nothing is free) to systems costing hundreds of thousands of £/€/€ (enter your own currency here – the number of 0's will still be huge!). Are they overpriced or underpriced?

Well actually neither!

The systems that cost the 'trailing 0's' are normally implemented by large multinational corporations needing multi country, multi language, multi-user/ administrator, back end system integration (CRM, ERM, HR, Accounting), legal audit trails etc. So they are getting what they want and paying for it.

The 'free' systems are never free (and here I make reference to a book on this subject which clearly outlines that nothing is actually free, but that free has become the norm because of the internet and that free now means a "sales leader" i.e. it seems free but to get what you want you then need to pay extra. (Free

by Chris Anderson, published by Random House in the UK and Hyperion in the US, both in 2009, ISBN 9781847940445. Copyright Chris Anderson©). They are never free because there is always a cost. The cost may be down the line with upgrades to provide the functionality you need, costing much more than you expect. Or it may be that they include adverts to pages you produce, which when you started creating your web was not a problem, but now, business has picked up and actually it's giving the wrong message to your audience, negatively affecting your sales because of the impression they make.

And take the free open source route, where a collective group of very talented and very clever people, using the Internet develop a CMS solution (these open source groups create all manner of solutions and CMS is just one of them). There are a number of these available and a lot of very powerful and very good ones. They are free, because no money changes hands. But to get some of these to run you need time and technical knowledge – and yes these are free – but is your time best spent configuring, installing, maintaining and administering a CMS? Do you have the knowledge to set up your own web server or identify a web server provider that can give you the correct configuration?



When you look at these options the answer may well be "Yes, this is the right solution for me", but it's not free - the



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cost comes in your time. The major consideration with Open Source, is 'Do you want to run your company's website on a solution built by a community that may disappear overnight?' Open Source is one of the best and most innovative uses of collaborative working on the Internet, but when it comes to business, you need consider your commercial aspects.

ISP solutions are often supplied as low entry-level solutions. They supply everything – web templates, e-commerce, hosting, email, data storage, unlimited visitor bandwidth – it actually sounds too good to be true. And as they say, if it sounds too good to be true, sometimes it just isn't true.

What can often happen is that the ISP is using these add-ons, which include the CMS, to promote their core web hosting business. So support is not geared up for you and your CMS questions. The CMS solutions commonly are limited with no expansion options unless you pay disproportionately more or have to start over again, ditching all the work you have put in to create your website and move to another solution they provide which is bigger, better and... yes, you guessed it, more expensive.

3. How easy is it to use?

Any CMS vendor worth their salt will say 'Simple to use. You can have your website up and running in no time at all.' And that will be a standard sales statement across all CMS vendors. And you'd be disappointed if they didn't say that! But you (or your co-workers) will need to be able to get to grips with the CMS. So make sure that you ask one or more of the following questions when you are evaluating:

- Can I see a demo? – which could be a face to face or an online demonstration
- Is there documentation supplied with it? – this could be hard copy or online, but needs to be available
- What browsers are supported? – you, or your company will have favourite/specified browsers that you use. Compatibility is key so check before you buy.
- What technical knowledge do I need? – you may have web programmer knowledge or you may not understand anything technical – that doesn't matter, you just need to make sure that it can be managed by anyone in your team, otherwise the convenience of CMS is lost
- Can I talk to an existing user? – Getting a recommendation straight from a user is the best thing you can do. What the supplier says may all be true, but different users have different views, so it's good to hear 'real life' experiences.

4. “If you build it they will come” (or Does it have SEO Support?)

Theodore Roosevelt's 1910 quote (or Kevin Costner in 1979's 'Field of Dreams') doesn't hold true for web sites. Just because you build a website doesn't mean anyone will come!

So while we have Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) Support at number four, it could be argued that this is the most important question to ask, because your CMS built website needs to be picked up by Search Engines to



Three search engines providers dominate 91% the market of the market:

- Google 64.6%
- Yahoo 16%
- Microsoft 10.7%

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make sure that you get the visitors you need. The various Search Engines use different aspects of your website and underlying code held within the pages to list and rank your website. So it is really, really important to make sure that the CMS you choose lets you manage these. The major websites reported by Nielsen™ in Q3 2009 showed three search engines providers accounting for just over 91% of the market - Google© with major dominance at 64.6%, Yahoo© at 16% and Microsoft© at 10.7%. And each of these search engines uses a different methodology (ranking algorithm), a different weighting of how they rank websites and a different approach to website page content relationship.

There is a whole science to SEO, but the basics such as meta tags, meta descriptions and friendly page names should be easily accessible and modifiable for every page on your web site. If the CMS you are looking at doesn't give you SEO control, then move on, because it might answer yes to the other nine questions, but 'So what?' because you will build it and no-one will come!

5. Can you analyse your CMS success?

With the availability of very good, free website analytics applications like Google Analytics, it's crucial that your chosen

CMS is set up in such a way that you can collect and analyse visitor statistics to maximise your website traffic.

Which begs the question, 'If I have created a website and I have a Google Analytics account, why wouldn't it work?' And, without getting too technical on this, it's all down to how the CMS works.



Google Analytics (as do all analytic packages) needs to be able to identify activity by page identifier. Some CMS systems don't allocate unique names (URLs) for each page and the end result is that the browser displays new information but doesn't change the page name. Google Analytics then logs that the same page has been displayed again.... and again.... and again. So your reports are skewed and any actions you take are skewed. To illustrate this point if you had a products page with products 1-10 listed with links to display more information, the CMS treats all products on that page as the same page name (e.g. products). Every time you click on the products page or a product click through, you will see a report saying that your products page is very popular, but the products listed (1-10) got no interest at all. The reality could be that product 1 is the most popular product you have, but you could view the stats. and drop all products on that page.

6. Is it Flexible? Will it play to your tune?

Before you select a CMS, you need to get a rough site layout in your head of what you are looking to have on the site. It doesn't need to be complete but you do need to get a feeling

Search Provider	Searches (000)
Total	10,812,734
Google	6,986,580
Yahoo	1,726,060
MSN/WindowsLive/Bing	1,156,415
AOL	333,231
Source: Nielsen MegaView Search	



10 QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN SELECTING A WEBSITE CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (CMS) PACKAGE

for how you think visitors will navigate around the site, ask yourself a few questions:

- Will it be just a few sections with a few items per section/page?
- Do you have distinct product or service areas that have sub-sections and multiple items within each sub-section?
- Do you need to have lots of images or documents on the site for visitors to download?

These are just a few of the questions, but with these in mind you need to look at examples that you see on the CMS site. Are they all just single level menus (e.g. no drop down menus or only one menu bar per page); are there on-page links for download links; do all of the sites seem to follow exactly the same structure (try ignoring the design images and colours of a site and draw a rough wire frame and see if all the sites just use the same frame layout).



With your own site layout and the examples you've seen – can the CMS do what you want? Or are you going to have to adapt your thinking to fit in with the CMS? If it's the latter, there's no flexibility... so move on.

With site content in mind, and harping back to the free theme, make sure that you don't have to pay every time that you upload an image or a document, you need free access for full flexibility.

That also goes for the hosting; a CMS hosting package normally comes with a web site storage allocation and traffic (visitor) allocation. Unless you are planning a high volume e-commerce site, traffic is not normally a major consideration, but as a rough guide an average web page will be around 30-35k, a monthly traffic allocation of 10Gb will provide approximately 300,000 views per month. You might not be expecting a lot of visitors but you want them to have access to a whole array of information and 500Mb of storage is normally more than enough for most companies, but if you are loading files to the server which are large, make sure you can upgrade to accommodate your requirements.

Then the future. You have an idea

of what you need on the website now. What's happening around the corner? You might have an idea of some things: today it's gathering sales leads and tomorrow it's expanding to sell off the site in an e-commerce world. And around the next



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corner? Well you probably don't know.

Markets are changing so fast that you could move into an area you had never considered. But that shouldn't matter where the CMS is concerned. Make sure that there are add-on modules available today. If there are then you can bet that more will be added on a daily basis.

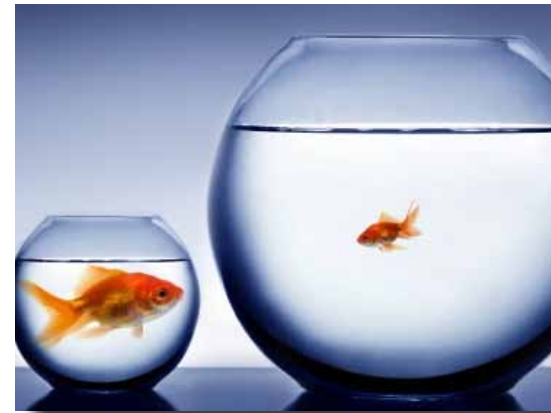
As an example, you may be handling your customer data locally on a networked CRM or a bespoke database/spreadsheet. Your requirements may change and an online CRM system such as Salesforce® may become a major requirement. Is there an upgrade to link into this from the CMS? This is just one example but the basic premise is assessing the CMS solution to make sure that there add-ons available, that the provider is flexible and that you won't need to read a technical manual to integrate. More importantly you don't need to get involved in any technical activity to make it work, it just needs to be a simple add-on upgrade.

7. Was it designed for you?

We all want a tailored solution that exactly matches our business, whatever the investment. And with a CMS you should expect that. But tailoring to your business and being used by businesses like yours for activities that are similar to yours can be two different things.

If you are a small to medium business that wants to look like

a major presence on the web, then make sure that the CMS solution you select to achieve a corporate-like image isn't just being purchased by major corporations. Your resources and expectations from a CMS provider will be different to those of a multi-national. And the CMS provider will be looking to manage your business like it manages their Times 100 clients. There's no sleight on either party, it's just a basic mismatch between you, the CMS and the provider.



Check out that your choice is being used in a similar way. The top uses of websites in business include:

- Publishing
- Marketing
- Web Services
- E-Commerce
- Document Management & Integration
- Customer Relationship Management
- Intranet/Internal Use
- Reservations and Bookings

Websites are commonly used for similar functions and one

10 QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN SELECTING A WEBSITE CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (CMS) PACKAGE

CMS will handle marketing better than another while the same CMS struggles with Customer Support.

8. What Social Media & Platforms?

Social Media is everywhere and doesn't look to be going away in the near future. The Web 2.0 approach (web applications which manage/provide interactive information sharing, interoperability and user-centred design) is used on a whole host of sites including hosted services, web applications, social-networking sites, video-sharing sites, wikis and blogs. Then there are the plethora of mobile devices that can access web sites easily and from anywhere:

iPhone, Mobile Phones, Netbooks devices that have more and more web access.

All of these activities and devices you need to consider and support. Your target audience defines what's important to you. But your target audience and their use of devices will change. So today you may need to support just web enabled mobile phones, but next quarter iPhones and netbooks could be crucial in your business. Testing the CMS produced websites on mobile devices is straightforward. Simply find an example on your CMS vendor's website, open a browser on your mobile device and go to that website. If it functions then you're fine. Most CMS systems should work to web standards using CSS 2.0, XHTML 1.1 and WCAG and modern mobile devices also display web pages using the same standards, so device support shouldn't be a problem.

Social Media & Web 2.0 are more specific. With Social

Media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn used as corporate communications marketing platforms, you need to be able to display on your website your own activity in those areas or selected information from them. Your CMS should be able to provide a feed mechanism that lets you display these items on your website and RSS feeds (Really Simple Syndication/ Rich Site Summary – frequently updated information). If they have these then, you may not need them but you have that flexibility and expansion built in for when you do need to go down that path.

9. Can it work with my team?

Your company, your people, your methodology, are all unique to you. No two working methods and structures are identical, similar yes, but never 100% identical – because people are involved.

As with the site content, think through how you work. Will it be just one person or multiple people updating the website? Will everybody have access to and authority to update and manipulate everything, or will you want restricted access? Do you need to hide pages as they are being edited, or do you need to have information being created held securely on a separate area that is published to the internet when you are





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Web Content Management System

MANAGED WEBSITE BUNDLE - CMS LICENSE OPTIONS

Extend and share the management of your web site

ready? What browsers do you use and what versions? Are they supported?

All of these need to be asked so that you can ensure that the CMS solution you choose supports how you work and doesn't require you 'work in a box' and change your working practices, otherwise it won't fit in. People's habits are harder to change and your website management should fit in seamlessly.

10. **And finally. "Ah, yes, but can it...?"**

Nothing is standard. If you ask the nine questions above and the CMS solution you are looking at meets your requirements, then you are on target for a good solution. But... (I know there's always a but!) everyone in business has an entrepreneurial streak, whether you started the business, own the business, manage the business or are employed in the business – you think outside of the square. So while you have chosen the right CMS solution, as you start using it to build and manage your website, you start massaging content and then you start thinking outside of the square and then you think, "Ah, yes, but it would be good if...?"

It's that light-bulb moment which means you want something added to, changed on, created for your own website. It could be next week, next month or next year, but whenever it comes you need to know that your CMS supplier is going to turn round and say, "That's interesting. Actually that's

exciting. Yes we could do that!"

The bottom line? A CMS solution needs to have real people around it to support and work with you to make your business website truly yours.

This list of questions is designed to raise points you may not have considered before and to make sure you select the right CMS for you.



A BIT ABOUT INSIGHT

Insight group is a PR and Marketing Consultancy with online marketing experience stretching over two decades, run by marketing professionals for marketing professionals

So what does that mean for you? Well, we've seen the Internet grow and integrate into our every day lives. We've worked with organisations large and small in the UK, Europe and Worldwide. And we can bring that experience and design creativity to bear on your web site. To make sure that it delivers what your visitors want to see, make it easy and enjoyable for them to find what they need and to make it exactly what you need to grow your business.

Simple when you know how. and we do.
Founded in 1988 to focus solely on the technology sector, our long history has given us a wealth of experience in business-to-business and business-to-consumer IT markets. With significant experience of harnessing technology for online marketing results.

The marketing campaigns we have delivered have propelled numerous clients to market leading positions. We have extensive experience in launching new companies, promoting leading organisations in new markets, managing mergers and

acquisitions and providing marketing activity that is designed based on a solid understanding of business.

Insight provides comprehensive campaign implementation when required for ad-hoc and ongoing campaigns. Our major specialisms are:

- Email Marketing
- Cms Website Design And Development
- Outsourced Marketing & Marketing Consultancy
- Lead Generation Marketing Campaigns
- Public Relations For The IT & Telecoms Industries
- Graphics Design

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