2016 BUYER’S GUIDE: CMS SOFTWARE MATRIX

A results-focused, visual buyer’s guide that ranks the top vendors in the Content Management System industry.
Defining an Enterprise Content Management System

In its most simplistic purpose, an enterprise-grade Content Management System (CMS) allows users to centralize data, content creation, editing, and publishing – all on a single back-end system. The primary goal is to arm non-technical business users with a solution to manage how content appears on a company’s website. However, contemporary needs discovered from use cases have found customer expectations to shift, and thus how we evaluate the effectiveness of a CMS has too.

Market Analysis: Shift In Approach

Prior coverage of the CMS space focused on primary functions within a software’s capabilities and the ease of which a non-technical user can take advantage of the tools. Standard features like Search Engine Optimization (SEO) capabilities, personalization tools, and more, of course, are paramount to web success. However, in 2016, our own research coupled with analysis from some of the best industry analysts, found that a paradigm shift in the Web Content Management industry has taken hold.

In the report “Market Overview: Digital Customer Experience Delivery Platforms,” Forrester Research describes the difference between niche software and true web experience management platforms:

"Enterprises leverage numerous software tools in support of cross channel digital customer experiences. However, market fragmentation and integration challenges have opened the door to integrated platforms.

Software vendors have bought and/or built a range of foundational capabilities for on-site digital experiences and have pushed integration with other tools, enabling enterprises to establish flexible, heterogeneous platforms that address their requirements."

Source: Forrester Research
Introduction to Content Management System Buyer’s Guide, 2016 Edition

Focus Beyond Software, Examine Ability to Deliver Results

Forrester Research refers to this as both Digital Experience (DX) and Customer Experience Management (CXM). Naming conventions aside, a focus on the solution, and how a Content Management System works within that full vision, has finally taken precedent when measuring what software selection will result in maximum Return On Digital Investment (RODI).

So, finally, analysis is moving away from functionality checklists and is more focused on the pairing of technology and the associated services to deliver a company’s digital experience vision.

Roadmap to Web Experience Management Success:

- Tiffany Elliot, Digital Clarity Group

Analyst’s Corner:

“In other words, the more software you need, the less important it becomes. The role of the software (and of the vendor selection process) is diminished in comparison to the role of the implementation, integration, and incorporation of the software into a complete solution.”

- Guide to Service Providers for Web Content and Customer Experience Management, Digital Clarity Group

“The implementation team is key to project success and definitely part of the solution. Overlooking that piece is folly.”

- Brice Dunwoodie, CMS Wire

Grading Rubric

Using curated research conducted by analysts from Gartner, Forrester Research, Digital Clarity Group, CMS Critic.com, CMS Report.com, CMS Wire, Fierce Content Management, CMS Harbor.com, and more, this guide will look beyond the selection process and examine a vendor’s total ability to deliver on the promise of the engagement, by rating Features, Ease-of-Use, Services, and Value. For complete numeric scoring see last page.
Features:

Make no mistake about it, the most important software selection your company will make is the Content Management System that powers your website. Going back to our CXM Model, we’re not just looking at the features ingrained into web publishing a CMS provides, but the integrated capabilities that create meaningful customer experiences.

Important Note: While select CXM features may not apply to your organization, understanding what’s important and what’s gratuitous, should come with asking vendors about real-world case studies and references.

- **Search Engine Optimization**: A CMS should make life easier on the marketer, allowing them to publish content that is automatically SEO friendly. This will maximize the visibility of your website.

- **Enterprise Search Management**: Over time, information on your website becomes buried inside databases, in folders, inside emails or on other media. Ultimately, the business value of the information can be largely diminished if consumers and employees cannot easily access the content. The problem is that many Content Management System providers CHARGE as much as a THIRD of the initial purchase price for their CMS just for an additional search mechanism.

- **Analytics, Personalized Customer Experiences**: “Personalization and targeting engines are the frameworks from which the practice of delivering tailored, digital interactions is made possible. Personalization is the first principle of relevance and a cornerstone of a sound customer engagement strategy.”
  - *Assessing and Improving Your Customer Engagement Maturity*, Digital Clarity Group

- **Commerce Considerations**: eCommerce capabilities are becoming increasingly important. Plug-ins or a basic shopping cart is no longer a sustainable model, and analysts are taking notice. Look for integration that is mature and developed.
Ease-Of-Use:

It's worth reiterating that the whole point of a CMS is to put your biggest marketing tool – your company website – back in control of your marketing team, alleviating the friction between IT issues and business context, and creating a customer journey reflective of your objectives.

While that sounds great, a CMS’ innovative features and effectiveness is only as good as the usability associated with the technology. Before even getting into the high-end capabilities, ask yourself: Is the dashboard easy to navigate around? How intuitive is the editing toolkit? Can you publish content in-line, as you roam from page to page?

- **Open Source Solutions:** This model to web development implies universal – or free – access to a product’s design or blueprint for redistribution, including subsequent improvements to the source code by anyone.

- **Proprietary Software:** Licensed under the exclusive legal right of the copyright holder, distributed to licensees under certain conditions, and restricted from other uses – such as modification, sharing, studying, redistribution, or reverse engineering. Usually the source code of proprietary software is not made available.

“Open source platforms absolutely have their place in the CMS market and may be a terrific solution for cash-strapped businesses or ones with minimal content management needs. However, enterprise-level paid systems bring a lot to the table – security, compliance and document management features, for instance – that free platforms often don’t. No system is infallible but why not at least give your company a fighting chance when it comes to keeping your content safe?”

- Lisa Hoover McGreevy, Fierce Content Management

“The Acquia user experience for authors and contributors continues to lag behind that of the market leaders who have focused on easy and flexible content creation and editing.”

- Gartner’s 2014 Magic Quadrant
Value:

Value, or “Total Cost of Ownership,” or price, or whatever other qualifier you want to put on your purchase, gets real complicated, real fast. In general, it’s difficult to pigeonhole the cost of a CMS, as it varies from project to project, but one thing that organizations fail to recognize as a key aspect in their CMS selection is the implementation process.

Beware of White-Labeling: Most vendors outsource their implementation processes to third-party partners. This adds significant cost and risk to any technology project. After all, you’re entrusting delivery to another organization. Do these third-party vendors know the software? What’s their track record with meeting deadlines? How about staying within the project’s budget? These questions, among others, are important to ask during your selection process.

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Analyst’s Corner:

“Adobe has enormous market momentum, but many organizations lack the skills to support its product’s implementation and management. Adobe proposes to give marketing professionals more control of the digital experience, but many organizations lack the technical skills to manage their digital presence.”

- Gartner’s 2014 Magic Quadrant

“[iAPPS] understands that Customer Experience Management involves first understanding where a client is — from a customer experience maturity standpoint — and then building a roadmap that will move them toward full customer experience management. ”

- Digital Clarity Group, Assessing and Improving Your Customer Engagement Maturity
Services:

Naturally, whether or not a CMS offers implementation services has significant influence on determining value; however, it also crosses over into our services section.

Also included in this component of the matrix is the help and support, training, and digital strategy services each vendor provides.

“EPiServer’s accelerated growth in its partner network combined with a lag in certification has given rise to a mix of competency levels. This leads to the need to thoroughly vet proposed third-party integrators in those regions where its partner ecosystem is expanding.

Some Sitecore customers have reported difficulties with its partner ecosystem. Sitecore’s partners seem unable to deal with the increasing complexity of deployments and digital strategies. Sitecore’s partner certification program has not yet addressed this issue.”

- Gartner’s 2014 Magic Quadrant
Final Thoughts:

The solution includes the professional services team, the buying organization’s specific context and needs, various processes, strategy, and the people and governance.

- Scott Liewehr, Digital Clarity Group

Selecting a CMS is all about your business context. Look to case studies or experience a potential vendor has working in your specific industry. In the end, your selection committee must consider each element – implementation processes (and customer satisfaction) & how your website can help your marketing team optimize its potential.