Helpful Guidelines for Choosing a Content Management System (CMS)

In today's fast-moving digital world, having the right CMS in place is critical to your organization's agility and long-term success. So what steps should you be taking to ensure that your next CMS is your last CMS? Here are some guidelines that should help move you forward.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

OPEN SOURCE VS. PACKAGED

Open Source is software whose source code is available to anyone for general use, modification or enhancement. Its attractiveness is in the fact that it is usually free, easy to install, and relatively lightweight (simply developed, simple to use); however …

- Open source also means there is no development path. It's evolution is at the mercy of the community who is participating in its development, always for free and usually on their own time.
- No support is available other than what you can find through the online forums.
- What most consider standard functionality, like image sliders and forms, is often only available through add-ons from other 3rd party sources, leading to the patchwork effect and unanticipated expense.

Common **Open Source** CMS Solutions:
Drupal, Wordpress, DotNetNuke, Joomla, MODX

Packaged Content Management Systems are, by comparison, expensive (something vs nothing, right?) and can be bulky (not so simply developed, not so simple to use). The pros are as follows:

- They come with tech support that addresses your specific problems.
- They come with a commitment to a certain standard for bug fix turnaround time.
- They typically come with a full-feature set of standard functionality.
- Other perks include professional User Group Conferences, certified tests for developers and content administrators, and certified training available through the company.

Common **Packaged** CMS Solutions:
Kentico, Ektron, Sitefinity, Sitecore

PRO TIP FOR OUR IMIS CLIENTS:

Your iMIS system is .Net based. If you want integration between your website and your database and you don't want to be in a world of hurt, you'll need to choose a .Net based CMS as well. Those are labeled in **orange** above.

COMPUTER SYSTEM innovations
sustainable solutions

We are seasoned consultants, developers, and designers who, like you, are passionate about doing great work.

We've parlayed our 75 combined years of Association Management Software experience into the highest service awards in the industry for more than 20 years. We are experts at integrating databases, websites, and 3rd party tools. Let us create engaging and branded experiences for your members and help you smooth out the bumps in your technology strategy so that you can concentrate on your mission.

WHAT ARE YOUR REQUIREMENTS?

Consider the features you'll need before you start your search.

You can feel like a kid in a candy shop when you see all that is possible. But the reality is, you are likely to use certain features extensively and others not at all, and the more bells and whistles, the harder it can be to maintain. Start with your needs vs your wants and then build the list up from there with your *nice-to-haves.* It will help to have figured this out before you start looking.

Once you've created your list, pluck away at the features list on the CMS's website and make sure they not only reference the key features, but have nice documentation on the areas most important to your organization.

Take note of what kind of skills your staff have.

- Staff who have prior experience with a CMS might have a good sense of what you'll want and what you won't want.

- Less experienced staff may need professional training, and the effort to find a more user-focused CMS (translate: easy to use) will pay off in dividends.

HEAD STILL SPINNING?

Call us: 630.681.1100
Email us: sales@csiinc.com

WHAT IS THE COMMUNITY SAYING ABOUT THE CMS?

Ratings don't lie! Don't be shy, check out testimonials and references from people already using a CMS. Ask about ease of use, upgrades, and extensibility. When we found the right CMS for our organization and our clients, we knew it. You know how? The support calls stopped coming! That's what you want.

HOW WELL DOES IT SHOW?

Schedule a demo to see multiple CMS solutions. For open source, sign up for a hosted site and make it your playground.

Focus on the high-priority features from your wish list. Which CMS's give the best presentation of these?

LEARN FROM OTHERS' EXPERIENCE

Years ago, using these guidelines, and of course some more technical ones, we at CSI went through the process of re-evaluating our own former CMS. The bad news is ours didn't hold up so well. But the process did bring us to our new CMS, Kentico. In fact, we liked Kentico so much, that we used it as an excuse to redesign our own website. Six websites later, we are more impressed than ever. For our clients, we believe Kentico offers the best combination of features, price and ease of use. They are solid partners who stand behind their product, so much so that they have a 7-day bug fix guarantee.

Years later, we know we made the right choice.

"Kentico makes it easy for any of our staff to update or create new pages in the spur of the moment. We love the in-context editor!"

ANN ARNOTT, POWER TRANSMISSION DISTRIBUTORS ASSOCIATION