

Selecting the right CMS platform

 By [Nick Durrant](#)

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A good CMS should save your business time and money, unfortunately knowing which platform is right for you, is not as simple. From an agency that has experience implementing CMS platforms for clients using Umbraco, EPiServer, Sitecore, Drupal and Wordpress, here's some advice on the thought-processes required to ensure successful integration of a CMS platform with your organisation in order to achieve business objectives.

Determining your organisation's readiness

Considering a CMS platform with a potential vendor in any organisational structure can be a daunting task, especially if the planning phase has not been properly implemented or even considered. The path to success is oftentimes overlooked because the areas required to navigate can be complicated and expensive, and in the event where the project to select a CMS platform has been underestimated in terms of scope and time, it may happen that there is scope-creep and budgets need to be stretched to accommodate the extra time needed to implement the CMS in your organisation. This is obviously not an ideal situation in any event which is why the planning phase is imperative to avoid such disruptions.



Sometimes the impact of the changes on such underestimations recover well and the relationship between the organisation and vendor is left relatively unscathed. However, the opposite can also apply and the damage done is too difficult to overcome. Unfortunately this scenario happens more often than not and can't be attributed to a lack of knowledge about requirements or the web, but rather to the organisation's lack of experience in what it takes to implement a platform of this nature. The need for a CMS usually comes around every five-seven years and processes tend not to be mature enough to adequately support requirements.

A few notable points of consideration:

- **Selecting a CMS has little to do with your eventual success** in terms of content management and web publishing.
- If you centre your planning efforts on the CMS selection process, your project is probably off track - **you shouldn't look at everything through a product lens.**
- **Technology matters** - if you're heavily invested as an organisation on open source technology, you won't want to bring a commercial .NET or Java-based platform on board.
- If you are considering a global, multilingual roll-out, **there are platforms that simply will or won't support these requirements.**
- **Figuring out the role of web** in your business and overall digital strategy is the first port of call.

Selecting a vendor/supplier

A good vendor/supplier should guide the discussion process and help reframe the approach from 'CMS selection' to 'CMS readiness'. Look for a cultural and technological fit by evaluating a vendor's professional services, as well as their partner network/channel. This should help an organisation determine the overall approach to the digital channel and how best to align it for success with a new publishing platform. This requires some important questions:

- **Vision:** Where does the organisation want to be in three-five years? What is the overall digital strategy that will drive business forward?
- **Customers:** What is the role of digital in enabling interaction with your clients and how will this influence the way you interact with them across their entire journey?
- **Content:** How are you approaching the overall content strategy?
- **Team & Culture:** How will you support the digital channel and CMS, and do you have well-defined roles and qualified team members in place?
- **Measurement:** What will define success and how can analytics and optimisation be used to drive ongoing value?

Justifying a new CMS investment

Thinking vertically and not horizontally in terms of adoption when considering what the criteria for a successful CMS platform is, is a good starting point.

Vertical adoption is a measure of how much the CMS is used and flashy features are no guarantee that a CMS will be utilised more. Most CMS clients are not ready to handle advanced web management. The fact that most customers feedback that they tend to use only the basic features, does not bode well for vertical adoption rates and if this doesn't improve, then customers will migrate to cheaper, simpler software and digital marketing goals will most likely not be realised.

Successful measurement of a CMS platform and accurate data on users are determined by those users who can get the most from the personalisation functionality in order to uphold a company's side of the conversation. To ensure that in the very least, an organisation considers the benefits of vertical adoption and evolved functionalities, these points are important:

- **Change the conversation** from how 'easy it is to edit a web page with a CMS' - to a more realistic view of web operations.
- **Set realistic expectations** for team size and composition.
- **Promote professional services** and mentorship programmes.
- **Focus attention on marketing** performance goals.
- **Identify and recognise teams** that are doing it right.

How to determine the right CMS for your organisation

- A prospective vendor should be a good cultural and technological fit for your organisation, providing the following aspects: **support, vision, community, stability and focus.**
- **Thoroughly research and understand your market** through your business' strategy. Understand your strategy execution before looking at software because it will help you understand requirements and thereby get the most from your CMS platform.
- **Build a shortlist.** This requires time to evaluate web CMS software for functionality and usability. To prevent time wastage on CMS products, firstly you need to determine whether the product is easy to use and supports all your requirements.
- **Filter your requirements.** Filter for relevant technology, your budget, business functionality and proximity of your partners.
- **Use a features matrix** to determine a list of features that a prospective CMS platform must have in order to meet your needs.
- **Lean on usage scenarios.** This describes the user's interaction with the system to achieve business objectives and encapsulates specific requirements to provide meaning and context.
- **Take product demos seriously.**
- **Don't overbuy.** This tends to happen when a strategy is not in place and creates a false sense of security, with organisations thinking that they can reduce risk by acquiring capability.

ABOUT NICK DURRANT

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