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Selecting a Content Management Solution (CMS)

1. The Lowdown

Web Content Management Solutions (CMS) are vast, and the choices available have undergone considerable change since 2007. More sophisticated tools exist, and social marketing and collaboration needs have changed the role of Web sites. IT and marketing must share involvement in the decision behind a new CMS. Marketing is capitalized as a department. Dialog should begin with a checklist of goals for the Web site. Consider the category of business you are in, the commercial and marketing expectations for the site, and current and future applications and content that will be disseminated on the site. Content should drive the decision, not the Web site plan or pages.

2. Why do I need to know about it?

If you have a CMS (whether it is a customized solution that was developed in-house or purchased with “out of the box” capabilities) if it was over 3 years ago, it might be time to re-assess the solution. Also, if you have more than one solution for various operating divisions, you might be able to consolidate all your CMS needs into one system now because better suites and services exist today. Understand the value a good CMS will add to your business.

3. What Do I Need to Do?

Think beyond the product’s functionality and how to manage pages on the site. With the IT team, consider the following on your checklist:

- Templates. How will content come together and be dynamic, not static?
- Administration. Who will be administrators and how many people will access and/or change content?
- Hosted solution, or managed inside? Where will the CMS be housed and deployed? The range of options is broad and influences the choices available. Human capital must be considered, and some companies opt for a combination, depending on budget and operating unit needs.
- Deployment of content. Who will manage this? What is the approval process? Does the speed and convenience of deployment satisfy your marketing and governance requirements?
- Professional services and on-line/phone support from the CMS provider. You will need help. So plan to budget for a bucket of consulting time to support Marketing and IT. Explore CMS partner relationships with social media and email firms, to leverage your marketing mix.
- End-user meeting. Sponsor one within your organization to answer, “Would you use this CMS?” Demonstrations are available.



- Testing and References. Ask who will likely be the chief administrator, and involve that person in a trial installation to test for usability. A good CMS should feel intuitive and relatively simple to a range of users. From IT loading a landing page, to Public Relations uploading timely news and video. Get feedback from current CMS users.
- Search friendly. Some CMS options can make your Web site more attractive to search engine crawlers than others. Be sure that your selection is up to the task of enabling your site to be found by consumers.

Ask peers at similar companies what they are using and whether or not they like it. Check reviews from these two resources: <http://www.cmswatch.com> and Gartner, Inc., which offers subscribers Web CMS reviews.

4. The thing to remember is...

Take time to consider the selection and look at it as an investment, not an expense. It will require not only a cash outlay but also a commitment of time of staff within marketing, IT, and operations. Marketing should have a definitive role in assessing the functionality of the tool, the system requirements to support the tool, and human resources necessary to implement the tool.