

Content management systems, reaping the rewards

Many smaller organisations have websites that aren't, or can't be, regularly updated. Often on these sites you'll find missing links and news of 'forthcoming events' that have not only happened, but have been long forgotten.

The internet is a primary source of information for a lot of customers and the importance of maintaining any business website should never be overlooked.

A well-maintained website will show customers that you are interested in keeping them up to date with all the latest news and product information, no matter what form of communication they choose.

With a content management system (CMS), both technical and non-technical personnel can immediately add, edit or delete information online. Investing in a CMS website can be a smart move for the future of any business.

Why CMS websites work

Content management systems are an incredibly convenient and straightforward way to control and manage web content. With a CMS you can maintain and grow your own website with complete ease, with a management program so user friendly, even the managing director will be able to use it.

A valuable investment

Taking the CMS option can be incredibly cost effective, especially if you plan to make continuing revisions and upgrades to your site. A static website may be cheaper at the outset, but requires a web designer to update your pages.

Easy to update

Users can become annoyed when they see out of date information or mistakes on a website, this may also cause legal issues. A CMS enables you to keep all of your web content accurate and current.

With a dynamic CMS, online information can be entered or changed in seconds. New products or offers can be added quickly and easily, improving your business's image and increasing the likelihood of return visits.

Anyone can add content

Content managers can set varying authorisation levels for different personnel. Approval processes can be fine-tuned to allow individual employees specific access privileges, enabling them to contribute and update particular website content from anywhere in the world.

By authorising your employees to make online changes, you can use the services of your web team more effectively and save money. A webmaster's time is far better spent focusing on technical areas like redesign and functionality.

Maintain brand consistency

Irrespective of the number of people working on or changing content, a CMS website will maintain your business's brand identity and aesthetic continuity throughout. Often styles are set globally, meaning that any text added will be formatted to a set of guidelines that have been implemented.

Gather customer information

A CMS that fully integrates with the data capture functions of your website will enable you to build a clear picture of visitors from the information they submit.

Alongside data capture, you can use your site statistics to monitor user browsing habits, to see which areas of your website are performing the best.

Basic online forms allow potential customers to submit their contact details and provide further information.

There are a number of ways to gather data from your online visitors:

- User defined forms
- E-marketing or newsletter subscriptions
- Secured member area login
- Online polls and surveys
- Comments and feedback
- Brochure and document downloads

Even if you only ask for contact details, this is a great starting point to follow up any potential leads.

Essential for e-commerce

For e-commerce, you need a CMS. With a dynamic CMS, e-commerce capability can be seamlessly added at any stage, always giving you the option to increase your sales with a complete online trading utility.

Fresh content = more traffic

Having new and interesting web content will establish your online reputation and encourage visitors to return.

With an RSS feed, potential customers can anonymously subscribe to updates without having to disclose their email address. Web users can be cautious when it comes to giving details over the internet.

Through RSS, prospective clients can skim through your latest headlines at their own leisure. A quality CMS will enable full control over the creation and management of your RSS feed.

Improve 'searchability'

Frequently changed web content will attract search engine robots / spiders to revisit (crawl) a website more regularly.

Search engine robots read META data to categorise and classify website information. META data can include structured keywords, descriptions and web page text. With a quality CMS you can edit META data and ensure that this is done correctly.

The highest possible search engine rankings can be achieved with a search engine friendly CMS, continually updated, relevant web content and the right META data.

Room to grow

A scalable CMS will grow with your website. Over time, the requirements of your site can easily change. Site content and user traffic could double, triple or even grow over ten fold.

Will your CMS be able to cope with this extra growth?

Scalability in a content management system is critical. There are a number of content management systems that work well with small amounts of content, but begin to slow down or fail as site content or web traffic increases. A properly scalable CMS works in tandem with scalable web server hardware, to make optimum use of all the available server space, efficiently handling any future expansion.

A good CMS will allow you to customise the functionality and add-on modules, such as document control features, discussion forums, events calendars and e-commerce facilities.

The right CMS will grow as online technology advances, allowing you to completely manage and expand your website's features, with only minor modifications and design styling required.

Efficient redesign

With changes in product ranges or corporate branding, many businesses may be looking to revamp their website every so often. Redesign of a static website requires a web designer to remake every single page, which can be time consuming and costly.

CMS websites can be 're-skinned', a process that essentially overlays a new skin on top of the original, leaving the website's database untouched.

A solid foundation you can build on

A web content management system provides you with the tools you need to manage and develop your own website. You can respond quickly to any changes your competitors make, keeping your customers up to date with all your latest offers.

As web technology advances, users increasingly judge a business's professionalism by their online presence. This presence is not only achieved with great design, but evolving content.

A CMS will enable you to keep ahead in an ever-competitive market. A dynamic website can enhance your business's reputation, improve search engine rankings and bring long term cost savings.