



What do we mean by Content Management?

A brief overview of the concepts behind Content Management and how it can help your organisation to harness the power of the web.

What is a Content Management System (CMS)?

Content is the information that a website contains, regardless of the format in which that information exists. HTML, downloadable Microsoft Office & PDF files, streaming audio & video and Flash movies are all examples of website content.

The 'look and feel' of a website (presentation) is determined by graphical design which is in turn often governed by corporate requirements, such as branding and the need to make the website content easily accessible to all website visitors.

The architecture of most websites does not draw the distinction between content and presentation. Each page is custom built to provide a specific mix of information to the visitor. If there is a change in the underlying information, each web page containing that information must be updated.

Content management systems implement a clear separation between content and presentation.

In a content management system, content is managed within a database application. Though most commonly published via a website, this single source of content can be published via multiple channels such as Interactive TV, PDAs, mobile phones, Web Services, RSS feeds and even printed media.

The presentation of the content is determined by templates specific to the target environment.

What are the Benefits of a CMS?

Ease of Use

Publishing ceases to be a technical discipline, since HTML and programming skills are not required in order to publish content to the web. This reduces the overhead on the IT department, and staff within the business can retain ownership for the content relevant to their business area.

Authorised staff can update and amend the site from geographically remote locations and at any time, using a simple web interface. This means that it is easy to react to rapidly changing events or circumstances.

Bottleneck Reduction

The time it takes to publish content is reduced since the publishing process no longer requires the intervention of a technically-skilled colleague. Users can be allocated roles within the content management system. In simple terms, roles determine whether a user is a content creator, a content approver & publisher or a combination of both. This means that responsibility for the maintenance of web site content can be devolved throughout an organisation but that total control of content can be retained at the appropriate level.

Consistency

A web site constructed from a series of custom built pages requires the developer to adhere to a strict style guide in order to ensure consistency throughout the site. If the site is large and created by a number of developers, or subsequently maintained by a different developer, the potential for inconsistencies increases. Since the look and feel of a content managed web site are governed by a number of presentation templates, attributes such as navigation, search, layout and design remain common and consistent throughout the site. As a result, there is an improvement in both the professional appearance of the site and the quality of the visitor experience.

Collective Ownership

Since staff within the business have a vested interest in the quality of the content that is accessible to their intended audience, there is a greater likelihood of that content remaining relevant.
