



The beginner's guide to content management systems

The beginner's guide to content management systems

2 / 12

A good website is regularly updated and grows over time. Jonathan Crossfield shows how administering the content on a hungry website shouldn't be painful.

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Easy administration.....	4
How does content management work?.....	5
Finding the time to produce content.....	7
User-generated content.....	8
Quality over quantity.....	9
Jargon buster.....	11
Content management systems from Netregistry.....	12

The beginner's guide to content management systems

3 / 12

Introduction

Great! You've got your new website up. Time to sit back and wait for the phone to ring, right? But wait - that competitor's website has way more pages than yours does.

In fact, it has new pages added almost every day, getting indexed in Google and attracting a lot more traffic. Then there's that other one that manages to automatically update all the product information and stock availability, creating a better customer experience. And the one that invites customers to leave comments and feedback, including them in building reputation.

And then it happens. Something needs changing across your entire site: a price, a logo, perhaps a name. Suddenly, days are lost as you manually go into every website file and repetitively type in and correct the new information - or worse, pay someone by the hour to do it for you. Surely there's a simpler and quicker way?

Today's perfect content may be out of date tomorrow. Even something as seemingly minor as updating your business telephone number can become a nightmare as you try to locate every outdated mention in every file and manually edit them before uploading. And then there is the possibility that some mentions are missed or forgotten - especially if you have a large or complex site. It isn't a professional look when a potential customer calls a long out-of-date contact number only to hear a disconnection message.

Let's have a look at some of the prime reasons you need to be thinking about content management.

The beginner's guide to content management systems

4 / 12

Easy administration

Too many business owners spend hours updating their website manually every time a customer buys something. How many products do you have? One? Ten? Five hundred? It can begin to overtake more important areas of your business when you find yourself frantically trying to type 'out of stock' onto the relevant pages before anyone else tries to submit an order. And then there are price changes, new stock listings, images to be added.

Online stores require constant administration, which is why most use a content management system (CMS) designed specifically for the purpose. This backend system allows you to log into a private administration area and make easy changes that are automatically reflected across the entire site.

Your website should ideally function as an additional member of staff, serving customers, processing orders, sending confirmation emails, producing reports and electronically restocking your shelves without constant supervision. This automation can be the difference between a website that drains your resources and one that grows your bottom line.

Online stores aren't the only websites that benefit from using a CMS. All sites that require regular content updates - blogs, news sites or any site more than a few pages - can either benefit from, or can't survive without, a CMS.

Yet there is an even stronger reason for small business owners to consider using a CMS, even for small sites: ease of use.

Most small business owners are not online tech whizzes or budding website designers. Most of you reading this would not consider editing the website files yourselves - and wouldn't know

The beginner's guide to content management systems

5 / 12

where to start with all that code. Even relatively minor changes can become expensive when outsourced, and larger changes to design or content can result in larger bills.

When paying for someone to design and build your website, wouldn't it make more sense to take delivery of something you can then administer yourself without incurring additional costs? Using a CMS is your guarantee that, should your website need changes or additions, you can handle the work, by yourself, in minutes.

How does content management work?

Instead of creating and saving the same information continually throughout your website, a CMS allows you to write it once and have the website work out how to include that content whenever it is needed.

A CMS displays web pages by selecting the relevant elements and piecing them together in the right configuration. For example, if the top of every page is going to feature the same business logo, menu items and contact details, you shouldn't need to repeat this information in each page file. Instead, the information that forms this part of the page would be stored in a single, separate file and each page file would contain an instruction to include this information in the right spot.

Each page is therefore assembled in the web browser like a jigsaw; header from that file, footer from over there, images from there, copy from there - and so on. You only ever need to write each of these files into the CMS once and they appear wherever in the site they are instructed to.

The beginner's guide to content management systems

6 / 12

There are many benefits of working like this.

- Your website takes up less space and requires less data by reducing repetition.
- Should an element need to be changed, you only need to edit one file. Change a product price in the right place and, once saved and published, the entire site reflects the change instantaneously.
- New pages can be created very quickly as many of the elements already exist. Only the fresh elements, such as specific content or images, need to be created.

Each of the elements required to build the website is stored in a database, housed on the server. Like any database, this is merely a structured collection of information, organised for easy access by the CMS. Databases can be created on the server for most hosting accounts and are merely a way of storing all this information in pieces, ready to be called up and assembled.

A CMS allows you to create and control these pieces, invisibly converting your words and images into code and storing them in the database.

The beginner's guide to content management systems

7 / 12

Finding the time to produce content

If you've decided to include blogs, articles or other regularly updated fresh content, you may find time becomes your enemy. Sure, a CMS makes these tasks quicker, but someone still needs to write and produce all this extra content. You have a business to run - when will you find the time on a regular basis?

You shouldn't attempt to produce hundreds of pages overnight. Many websites have languished unfinished and unseen because the person behind it never finishes the sheer amount of content they've planned. Even the biggest websites started small and grew over time to achieve such a large number of pages. They didn't wait for all this content to be finished before launching - instead working steadily over the weeks and months, growing in increments.

Ideally, put aside a couple of hours each week to write content. This is usually enough time to produce a strong blog post or a couple of useful pages of copy. Choose a time when you aren't required elsewhere - for example, when your family regularly watches those television programs you hate - so you can keep to this timetable without it impacting elsewhere. Over a year, that's at least 52 new pages of strong content.

Alternatively, delegate. If you have a few employees or business partners, share the load. If each person produces one webpage, blog post or article per month, you could generate quite an informative website quickly and easily.

One of the great advantages of a CMS is that you can create specific user profiles and give each person permission to change or contribute only to the sections of the site you feel is necessary. You can also decide whether these contributions are automatically pushed 'live' or whether they pass through an approval hierarchy first.

The beginner's guide to content management systems

8 / 12

This simple functionality allows you to include far more of your employees in the day-to-day running of the site without risking mistakes or inappropriate behaviour. And because the CMS is web-based, you can log into and change your website from anywhere you have access to a PC and an internet connection.

User-generated content

One way of building useful content while also engaging with customers, is to allow visitors to leave comments or reviews. A CMS allows you to include forms and features that enable users to enter their own words - or even images, video or other content - and instantly have their input included within the relevant pages.

Allowing visitors to leave reviews or provide feedback on your product pages can be a highly influential way of encouraging further sales (assuming the comments are positive). Customer feedback was central to the success of eBay, and Amazon relies on customer reviews to help sell its books. A CMS gives your business the same power.

User-generated content is a popular way for websites to grow, as it relies on other people giving you useful content for free. People want to have a say, provide their opinions or show their own talents. By providing a means to do this - that complements your own business model - there is less pressure on you to continually provide content.

Invite the customers in, engage them, stand back and watch it grow.

The beginner's guide to content management systems

9 / 12

It is a good idea to moderate this content to avoid spam or undesirable copy appearing on your webpages. Sometimes content can be automatically approved - from trusted contributors say - but sometimes it may be necessary to store comments or items in a queue within your CMS for you to approve when next you log in.

The CMS allows you to specify what can happen automatically and what requires your approval or moderation before appearing on the site.

Quality over quantity

It is incredibly easy - and all too common - for online entrepreneurs to become so tied up in design, colours, imagery and layout that the content suffers. Yet it is the content that will attract visitors to your site and hopefully keep them there long enough to buy something.

But don't risk making the mistake of believing that just any content will achieve this. Your target audience wants to read information that speaks to them, answers their questions or inspires them. Too many websites attempt to create lots of content by producing pages of waffle - quantity over quality. But pumping the website with as many keywords as possible is less important than producing text people would actually want to read.

A CMS will help you to control and produce reams of content far easier, but the quality of that content is still your responsibility. To define what content you should be producing, place yourself in your customers' shoes. If you were in the market for a particular product and were using Google for research, what questions would you want answered? What information would you want to see? What advice would you find helpful?

The beginner's guide to content management systems

10 / 12

By producing content that specifically helps your target audience, you will be rewarded with higher traffic and - if the content is particularly good and original - other sites may link to it, providing further traffic and increased reputation.

So, don't write content for the search engines, but write engaging words for your target audience. Sure, you're giving away free advice and intellectual property, but in return you get more customers with more trust.

Content - and your means of managing it - should be considered before any designer starts work. A content strategy that encapsulates a CMS, a production schedule, those responsible for producing the content and a style of content that supports your business, will dictate various aspects of the design and construction of your website. Considering these things after design and construction have begun can be a costly mistake.

Website builder or content management system?

Many people launch their first website with a simple application such as Netregistry's DIY SiteBuilder. As this application allows you to enter information and images into a simple interface to create and publish your website, site builders are a limited form of content management system.

DIY SiteBuilder allows users to add and edit pages easily without hiring designers or learning all that messy code. When installed on a suitable hosting service with access to database technology, DIY SiteBuilder can also create blogs and other interactive features.

If your needs are simple and you don't plan on lots of website administration, a website builder like DIY SiteBuilder could be a good first CMS for a small website.

The beginner's guide to content management systems

11 / 12

Jargon buster

Server - The specially configured hard drive that stores the website pages and serves them up to internet browsers when the appropriate address is typed in.

Static hosting - Standard or basic hosting. The server software is not capable of manipulating the data stored within.

Dynamic server - A dynamic server can include databases capable of storing, manipulating and generating information into new webpages in response to requests from the viewer.

Static site - a website with unchanging pages.

Dynamic site - allows webpages to change based information entered. Includes online shopping carts, search functions or leaving comments or posts.

Shopping cart - an application that allows a customer to select and pay for items within the website itself.

Payment gateway - attached to the shopping cart, this is the encrypted process for transferring payments to your bank.

HTML - HyperText Markup Language - used to build most static webpages.

Flash - a programming language for creating animated imagery and interactivity.

The beginner's guide to content management systems

12 / 12

Content management system - Sometimes called a CMS, a content management system is an internet application that allows you to edit and manipulate your website online.

Content management systems from Netregistry

DIY SiteBuilder: Free with any Netregistry hosting account

- Customisable templates that are easy to use
- Simple tools to edit and create new webpages
- Just enter your content and away you go
- Capable of producing blogs, photo galleries and more

StoreXpress: from \$59.95 per month

- Complete online store CMS and hosting package
- Plenty of templates to make building your website a snap
- Administration tools to help edit and monitor all products and pages
- Different levels include automatic integration with other platforms including eBay and Australia Post

Custom CMS website: Quotes available

- We can advise an appropriate CMS solution for your needs
- Even complex websites can be made easy for any skill level to use
- You're only limited by how much content you can produce

Netregistry.com.au has everything you need for every stage of your online business. With lower prices and easy services designed for the average business owner, you can be in control. Call **1300 638 734** to let your ideas loose.

Call **1300 638 734** or visit netregistry.com.au

