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Drupal

By Ryan Goodrich

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Drupal is [content management system software](#) that is beloved by a large and thriving developer community. The ever-evolving magnum opus of developer Dries Buytaert, the [system](#) , its modules, and its users and developers value the flexibility, simplicity and extensibility in the CMS coding.

The theory here seems to be making the core [files](#) light on the features – a veritable blank canvas on which to create. This philosophy obviously isn't for everyone. Drupal's installation files are small, but that's because you will need to install and tweak numerous plugins before you can design the website of your dreams.

Drupal contains a basic framework and interface with which you can become familiar and comfortable. The features it includes allow you to create a bare-bones website with content, user groups and more. However, it is still missing that extra "oomph" that makes a website look truly amazing. That's where the add-ons come in.

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The main feature that is most glaringly missing from Drupal is its lack of a WYSIWYG interface. This may not seem important at first until you realize the ease that this type of interface gives you when you are creating and publishing new content. Unless you have a working knowledge of HTML, all of the text in your articles will be plainly formatted and unimpressive. Installing a module for rich text editing is imperative to create rich and vibrant content for your website. We are in an age of the internet where professionalism is critical to successfully attracting visitors.

One of the main criticisms of Drupal is its reliance on modules and other [software](#) extensions. The initial installation is quite bare bones and requires you to visit the module storehouse immediately to start expanding the capabilities of the software. This can be a good and a bad thing. It's good for knowledgeable users who want to create a site without modules that they view as unnecessary. However, this can be bad for relatively new users who are ultimately uncertain regarding how to approach website design through this [content management](#) system. After all, it can be a pretty daunting task to start from the beginning.

The lack of built-in features has helped to cultivate a thriving library of downloads and extensions for Drupal websites. The faithful community members here have helped create a

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treasure trove of tools that will help your website fulfill a wide range of uses. For example, we found numerous modules intended to improve and build upon the current administrator interface for added functionality. We also found modules to enhance social interaction on your site, such as plugins for comments, forums, user profiles and more.

This inherent reliance on modules can ultimately lead to the downfall of any site if it is not properly maintained. Typically, you will need upwards of 20 or more modules in order to have the functionality necessary for your site. When you consider the ever-changing nature of software and the need for constant updates for both the CMS and your modules, this has the potential to become quite a nightmare. No one wants to keep up with updates on 20 modules.

Drupal offers a unique approach to CMS software in comparison to other products. From the ease of a single menu at the top of your browser, the interface allows you to manage the content, themes, users and modules of your site. Rather than keeping the back and front end of your content management system separate, you can view how the changes you make impact the appearance of each page. This effectively eliminates the constant need for having two tabs up in your browser to view both the back end and front end of your site.

One aspect of management that we found particularly helpful is Drupal's series of reports that we haven't found on the immediate install of any other CMS. One report gives you the overall status of your site so that you can be aware of any issues with coding or overall operation. In addition, you can look at reports that log recent changes to the site, track "access denied" errors and even check for new system updates.

Security capabilities through Drupal are on par with the going standard among CMS software. Modules are obviously available to extend the level of security and protection offered to both your site and user information. As for what's included with the initial framework, you can use the dashboard to monitor such things as new users and recent content contributions (as well as who wrote the content). Sandbox testing is the only feature we looked for that is not immediately available, though there are modules available for this purpose.

Drupal content management system software offers the full complement of support, with smoke tests available as – you guessed it – a plugin. The forums and documentation aren't perfect, but they are active, and if you do have a nail biter of a problem, you should most assuredly be able to find someone with the answer to your dilemma.

Drupal is an amazing assemblage of open source development that works from scratch to create something unique. The drawback of earlier versions of this software is its reliance on development as a maintenance tool. With the release of version 7.0, it has become a tool that those of us without a background in coding can comprehend. It is much more user-friendly than earlier versions, which makes this a valuable CMS for the world of websites.

Drupal is quickly expanding its boundaries and capabilities to fill diverse roles in social networking, eCommerce, multimedia and more.

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