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CIS 244

CMS Review

**Content Management System Findings – Lynnwood Bowl and Skate**

**Executive Summary**

On May 18th, 2011, upon the conclusion of my SEO work with Lynnwood Bowl and Skate, they proposed to me to investigate the possibility of integrating a Content Management System (CMS) with their website. Lynnwood Bowl and Skate wishes to look into this because the company lacks the resources to bring on a webmaster, or to have one contracted on a continual basis. A CMS based website would in theory would allow most any employee with basic computer skills to create and update content for the site, help the company keep their IT costs down, and enable the company to stay better connected with current and potential customers.

I started looking into this matter by first off investigating the current structure of the website and how the site is hosted. Lynnwood Bowl and Skate’s website is currently comprised of static HTML web pages that is hosted on a GoDaddy Linux hosting plan. Their website was created using GoDaddy’s Website Tonight tool, which is a Starfield Technologies, Inc. development tool. On the local side, Lynnwood Bowl and Skate’s computers are PC’s that run Windows 7 with Microsoft Office products and no web development software.

I then proceeded to ask Lynnwood Bowl and Skate their needs and requirements in regards to implementing a CMS solution. They stated that the CMS would need to be user friendly for the average computer user, provide a way of generating rich content, keep overall costs to an absolute minimum, and be scalable for future growth.

A number of CMS solutions were taken into consideration. Lynnwood Bowl and Skate was aware of the Joomla! and Drupal open source CMS systems and requested they would be considered in the proposal. Other options that were considered was implementing an ASP.Net solution, a fully custom CMS solution, and using Adobe Dreamweaver to better update the content of each web page.

After carefully researching a number of different CMS solutions and comparing them to Lynnwood Bowl and Skate’s needs and requirements, I have determined that the Joomla! open source CMS is the best possible solution. Joomla! provides the end user (the business owner) with an easy to user system, is open source with no software costs, provides excellent SEO features, rated well for providing a rich content experience, and is scalable for future operations. Lynnwood Bowl and Skate’s GoDaddy plan is fully compatible with Joomla!, which means there would be no extra costs in migrating the website to another hosting provider.

**Solutions Breakdown**

**Joomla!**

Overview: Joomla is an open source content management system that uses PHP and MySQL to display and store the site’s content. Originally released in 2007, it has been downloaded 21 million times. Joomla offers a multitude of user functions, such as full SEO capabilities, simple e-commerce setup, a user friendly admin section, numerous plugins and extentions, etc. Migrating from the website’s current setup to Joomla! is fully documented and easily accessible through Joomla’s main website.

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| Advantages | Disadvantages |
| Open source, completely free to use. | Higher development cost than utilizing Dreamweaver (but overall cost can be comparable if current site layout is kept intact). |
| Extremely user friendly. | Slightly steeper learning curve than Dreamweaver. |
| Relative ease of developing custom add-ons and extentions. | Less stable and scalable than Drupal under very demanding enterprise level operations. |
| Excellent built in security | Some site expansions may still require development time. |
| Admin section can be accessed at any computer with an internet connection (once site is deployed). | Cannot support asp.net applications, integration with other Microsoft products very limited. |
| Excellent media and SEO capabilities. | Higher risk of crashing if there is a abrupt spike in traffic. |
| Easier to upgrade than Drupal |  |
| Runs on most any server architecture, keeping server/hosting costs low. |  |
| Lowest overall cost of the CMS solutions (Dreamweaver can be lower under certain circumstances). |  |

**Drupal**

Overview: Like Joomla!, Drupal is another open source CMS that runs on PHP and MySQL. Originally released in 2001, Drupal is currently in version 7.2 and is the most widely used open source CMS. Drupal has usability features that are very comparable to Joomla! and offers rock-solid stability and scalability.

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| Advantages | Disadvantages |
| Open source, completely free to use. | Higher development cost than utilizing Dreamweaver (but. very comparable to Joomla!) |
| Extremely stable and scalable, more so than Joomla! | Steepest learning curve of all solutions. |
| Relative ease of developing custom add-ons and extentions. | SEO media capabilities not as good as Joomla! |
| Admin section can be accessed at any computer with an internet connection (once site is deployed). | Some site expansions may still require development time. |
| God SEO capabilities | Cannot support asp.net applications, integration with other Microsoft products very limited. |
| Runs on most any server architecture, keeping server/hosting costs low. | Upgrading versions is extremely difficult to manage, may require assistance from developer. |
| Drupal has the best built in protections against crashing. |  |
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**Custom CMS**

Overview: A custom CMS tailored to Lynnwood Bowl and Skate’s needs can be developed using PHP and MySQL. Lynnwood Bowl and Skate would have a high level of control over how CMS features are developend, with the only limitations being the cost of development as well as the capabilities of PHP, MySQL, and my skill level. I have designed two websites that have different levels of CMS capabilities, and have the experience level necessary to implement such a solution for Lynnwood Bowl and Skate. The websites are as follows:

http://septicnow.com

http://www.reelprosnw.com

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| Advantages | Disadvantages |
| Utilizes open source technology, no software costs. | Highest development and overall cost of any solution. |
| Tailored to the exact needs of the business, usability essentially guaranteed. | Steeper learning curve than Dreamweaver. |
| Security settings are fully customizable. | Scalability is more expensive in comparison to Joomla! and Drupal. |
| Admin section can be accessed at any computer with an internet connection (once site is deployed) or restricted to select computers. | Any site revision beyond updating the content that is editable by the CMS will almost certainly require development time. Cannot take advantage of add-on’s and plugins available for Joomla! or Drupal. |
| Media, SEO, add-on functionality only limited by developer capabilities. | Cannot support asp.net applications, integration with other Microsoft products very limited. |
| Easier to upgrade than Drupal and Joomla! | Higher risk of crashing if there is a abrupt spike in traffic than Joomla! or Drupal. |
| Runs on most any server architecture, keeping server/hosting costs low. | Proper security must be personally addressed by developer (adding to costs). |

**Dreamweaver**

Overview: While not an actual CMS product, Dreamweaver is a very capable *What You See Is What You Get* (WYSIWYG) editor and also provides a point and click solution to managing a web page’s SEO aspects (i.e. the Meta Elements). Dreamweaver is friendly to the basic user who knows little to nothing about underlying web technologies, yet allows an advanced user unrestricted access to the source code.

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| Advantages | Disadvantages |
| Lowest initial overall cost (if current overall site layout is kept intact and accessability needs are limited to one or two computers) | Web pages can only be edited on computers with Dreamweaver installed. |
| Lowest learning curve for the end user (difference between Dreamweaver and Joomla is minimal though). | Proprietary software, $400 for a copy that includes licenses for two computers. Costs can escalate rapidly if more licenses are required. |
| Does not require additional security since it doesn’t directly interface with the internet. | Future Dreamweaver upgrades might be required to keep pace with expanding web technologies. (more $$$) |
| Easy point and click access to page’s meta elements. | Any site revision beyond updating the content that Dreamweaver is capable of doing in WYSIWYG mode will almost certainly require development time. |
| Media, SEO, add-on functionality only limited by developer capabilities. | Highest risk of damaging page functionality if person editing page isn’t properly trained and/or access to editing web pages insn’t properly restricted. |
| Software can be installed on either Windows or Mac OS’s. | Cannot take advantage of plugins or extentions that Joomla! or Drupal offer (if used as stand-alone solution). |
| Supports most major web technologies, including ASP(.Net). | Highest overall risk of escalating costs. |
| Can be used as stand-alone solution or in conjunction with any other CMS solution. |  |

**ASP.Net Solutions**

Utilizing an ASP.Net solution was initially considered as a possibility for Lynnwood Bowl and Skate. However, this approach was rejected for in depth analysis because the development and ongoing costs would be significantly higher than any of the previously mentioned solutions with the only advantage being an easy integration with other Microsoft products. Lynnwood Bowl and Skate does not require such an advantage out of their website at this time. If this ever changes, utilizing an ASP.Net solution can be revisited.

**Report Summary**

I selected Joomla! for Lynnwood Bowl and Skate’s CMS solution because it offers the best overall combination of costs, benefits, and risks for business needs. While implementing Dreamweaver might be a slightly more cost effective solution, Joomla! offers much better protections against escalating costs and minimizes the need for future development. The administrative end is accessible from any computer with an internet connection and provides better control over the changes to the website than Dreamweaver can. While Drupal provides some advantages over Joomla!, the advantages only become apparent in very large scale enterprise level operations. Lynnwood Bowl and Skate’s business plan is not geared towards such operations, so Joomla’s weaknesses are not likely to be noticed. Joomla’s strengths over Drupal, particularly in media and SEO capabilities, are also right in the areas Lynnwood Bowl and Skate need them to be. Lynnwood Bowl and Skate’s needs and requirements out of a website also do not justify the use and expense of developing a custom CMS solution.

With the conclusion of this report, I am completely ready to commence the steps to implement a Joomla! CMS solution upon review and approval of the company.

# Works Cited

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