

Choosing the Ideal

CMS

CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM



ENGAGE
ENABLE
ACCELERATE

Balancing Organizational Success Factors,

Technology Needs, and Total Cost of Ownership

There are over 1 billion websites online today, powered by hundreds—if not thousands—of different platforms.

Selecting the right Content Management System for your organization can be a daunting task. Should you choose the most popular platform, WordPress? Perhaps you have a specialized need like eCommerce, and are gravitating towards Magento? Or maybe you have the budget to support a solution like Adobe Experience Manager?

The number of choices and price points—from free to upwards of six figures—makes you wonder what the differences between them truly are, and, even if you knew each and every factor down to the icon for adding a link, how do you decide what is right for your unique needs?

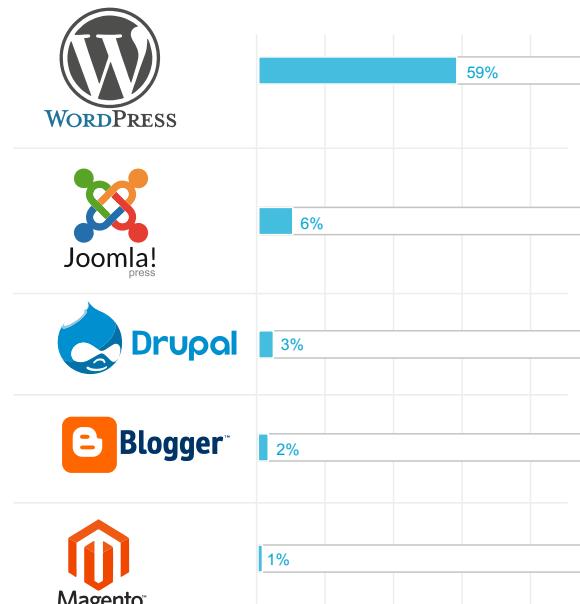
You may find the answer surprising.

The unspoken truth

The companies promoting their platforms aren't going to tell you this, but the truth is that most systems do the same things, often in the same way, and sometimes using the same underlying code. Like every car on the market comes with four wheels and a brake pedal, every CMS is going to include tools to help you post and edit the content on your website, build new pages, archive old ones, etc.

The differences become more apparent when you start examining extended features like marketing automation, or the underlying technology like Open Source or Microsoft's

TOP 5 CMS by MARKET SHARE



.NET platform. The more expensive systems tend to include more features out-of-the-box and use proprietary programming, but the less expensive ones usually have equivalent options with third-party enhancements — and most end-users aren't concerned whether they are running MySQL or MS-SQL.

This brings us back to the original question: How do I decide which one is right for me? The answer begins with identifying what is most important for your organization.

IMPORTANT ITEMS TO CONSIDER

There are plenty of factors to consider, but try to organize your thoughts around a few important areas that are certain to impact your short and long-term success, as well as your total cost of ownership.



OUT OF THE
BOX?



THIRD-PARTY
ADAPTABILITY?



ORGANIZATION
SPECIFIC NEEDS



EXTERNAL
INTEGRATIONS



EDITING
CAPABILITIES



ACCESS TO
IMPORTANT FEATURES

PLATFORM: Open Source Proprietary | **TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP:** \$ _____

What features do you need?

There are many shared features across Content Management Systems, but certain platforms specialize in certain tasks like eCommerce or Marketing Automation, others are jacks-of-all-trades, and some require third-party software. Therefore, it's important to begin by identifying your needs now and in the foreseeable future, and then comparing them to offerings from top providers. A few things to keep in mind:



Basic features are likely to be very similar across platforms, but there can be differences in how supporting aspects are handled like keeping a history of all changes to a web page, or configuring an approval process before a change is posted to the site. If you require specialized features like these, be sure to look closely at how they are implemented in the solutions you are considering.



E-commerce and other purchasing features are an important area where systems are likely to diverge, and many popular solutions only support an online store front using third party tools. These tools may or may not suit your needs, making this another area that should be carefully considered.



Personalization and marketing automation are rapidly evolving feature sets designed to support one-to-one engagement with your customers and prospects. While these features are highly desirable, their implementation can vary considerably. They can be sold as part of an upgraded package, part of a separate product, or as an all-in-one, and should be looked at very closely if they are important to you.

How will you make it your own?

Unless you're looking for a very basic site, it's unlikely that any single system will be perfect out-of-the-box, and you might need to change a few things to fulfill your specific needs. This is perfectly normal, especially if you need to integrate a third-party application like a Customer Relationship Management System or Enterprise Resource Planning Application, but there are a couple of things you should consider:



Identify how customizations are handled in the platforms you have short-listed. There are usually several options to enhance a given system, and a good starting point is trying to determine whether other organizations have done something similar. If they haven't, there might be an underlying reason you need to know before you start building your next generation site.



Research any third-party systems to see if they've been integrated with your potential Content Management Systems, and if there are any reported challenges or issues with the implementation.

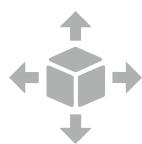
Other factors like the underlying platform and developer community can also play a role customizing your solution.

Can you use it everyday?

The user interface and overall experience is a key area where systems can differ dramatically; some use very minimalist designs to get started with little training, others have more features up front for power users. The look and feel you prefer is a matter of taste, but two things stand out:



Make sure you see it in action and believe you can live with it every day; a great website requires frequent updates, and it is not uncommon for administrators to spend hours at a time working in an enterprise Content Management System. You need to be certain it's something you can enjoy using on an ongoing basis.



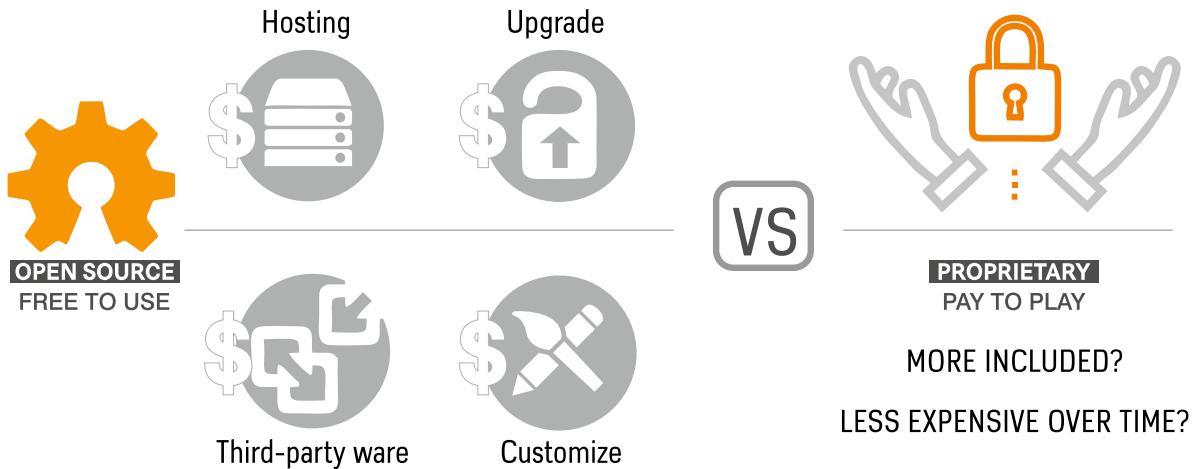
Double-check how third-party modules and any customizations are shown in the system. Sometimes these features are not fully integrated in the overall user experience, and need to be accessed in a separate area. While there's nothing wrong with that in principle, in practice a frequently used third-party feature that is separate from the main interface can be a burden.

A few more things to consider

After you've taken a closer look at the features, customizations, and user experience, there are a few more items to consider that can have an impact on the success of your new site and the total cost of ownership.



Understanding total cost of ownership



All of the above adds up to your total cost of ownership, both for the initial implementation, and for ongoing support and future upgrades. While the investment can vary greatly based on the individual systems, be sure to consider both one time and ongoing costs—open source systems are technically free to use, but there are costs associated with hosting, upgrades, third-party tools, and customizations that can add up quickly. A proprietary system may have an upfront fee, yet be less expensive to operate over time.

The next big questions

You probably aren't surprised to learn that there's more to selecting a CMS than can fit in a single whitepaper. We've done our best to be as thorough and thought provoking as possible, but—like many things in life and technology—anwering one question only leads to another. We will close with a few that jump to mind:

- ① How many administrators do you have working on your site?
- ② Do you need intranet features as well like Team Sites or a Document Library?
- ③ Where do you plan on hosting the new site?
- ④ When was the last time you thoroughly reviewed and updated your content?
- ⑤ How are you going to preserve the gains you've made in search engine results after switching to the new platform?
- ⑥ **Last but certainly not least, do you have a partner you can trust on this journey?**

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