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Is your CMS flexible enough to deliver your digital strategy?

Your digital strategy goes beyond a website or blog. It can only be delivered by a flexible open-source CMS platform.

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How a flexible platform delivers connectivity with CRMs

"Even simple use cases can be challenging if the CMS is not built on an open architecture. A flexible CMS shrugs off these challenges."

Forward

> "For organisations to deliver a coherent digital strategy, they need systems that prioritise connectivity, security and long-term cost effectiveness"

Theo Paraskevopoulos, CEO

Open-source Content Management Systems [CMSs] have been around for 25 years - a digital aeon. From simple blog engines to fully-fledged publishing platforms, they power pretty much every professional website on the internet. But for all their ubiquity, a lot of systems cannot support digital endeavours.

As customers demand seamless services from the brands they interact with, CMSs that continue to offer mere content publishing are no longer fit for purpose. For organisations to deliver a coherent digital strategy, they need systems that prioritise connectivity, security and long-term cost effectiveness - features that collectively describe a "flexible" CMS.

In this eGuide, we will help you determine whether your current system is flexible enough, and hone in on the typical scenario of linking your website with a CRM.

At GrowCreate, we recommend Umbraco as the only open-source option flexible enough to deliver growth strategies. How does your system measure up?

Speed read

Why it's time to move to a flexible open-source CMS platform.

As customers demand a seamless experience from your brand, your digital strategy requires multiple systems to be connected to your website in real-time.

Many companies are using open-source CMSs that only support simple web publishing, and cannot be easily integrated with other systems.

For your digital strategy to success, you need a modern open-source CMS platform, with a flexible architecture that allows seamless connection with other systems.

This guide looks why migrating to a flexible CMS platform is crucial to gain a competitive advantage, and how partnering with a specialist can help simplify the process.

Introduction

The world of digital publishing moves incredibly fast. Only a handful of years ago, organisations were just discovering content and inbound marketing. Today, omni-channel experiences and Machine Learning personalisation are driving the conversation, and some digital professionals are struggling to keep up.

To some extent this is the result of older generation CMS technology, which is often stuck in the publishing mindset. Commercial systems (we like Episerver) have already made the transition to integrated experience suites. Delivered on the Cloud and wrapped in service layers, they deliver not just websites but digital strategies.

There are open-source systems of similar scope, but you need to look for the evolved systems have made the transition into flexible CMS platforms.

These systems feature:
- Multiple connectivity options
- Best practice security and data protection
- Value release over longer periods of time

If your organisation has also progressed beyond publishing, your current CMS may have already presented you with challenges. But how can you assess if it is inhibiting your digital strategy?

"CMS tech is often stuck in the publishing mindset. Look for evolved systems have made the transition into flexible platforms".

Adam Weston, Managing Director

Is your CMS inhibiting your digital strategy?

"More two-thirds of marketers feel that having a customer experience that spans multiple channels is important."

To deliver a digital user experience, your website needs to provide the entry point for may interconnected systems. When you consider whether your current CMS is fit for purpose, you should assess its capacity to draw data from, and transmit data to other systems in your digital arsenal.

Below, we take a look at some critical signs that indicate that your current CMS is inhibiting a seamless digital experience. Look for these signs in projects where requirements included connecting CRMs, external databases, payment providers or mobile apps.

Limited range of connectivity options

In earlier stages of digitisation, many organisations didn't give enough weight to the connectivity potential of candidate systems, scoring them instead on publishing capabilities alone. As a result, their websites have poor connectivity options, forcing developers to "hack" solutions and code against best practice.

In contrast, modern CMSs have an open architecture, offering a wide range of integration tools to developers. The architecture safeguards best practice whilst allowing organisations to combine data from multiple systems. In a hyper-connected environment, it is essential that your CMS is flexible enough to deliver your digital strategy without compromising quality.

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Concerns about security and data protection

When implementation diverges from best practice due to connectivity limitations, the biggest problem that organisations face is with security and data protection. As CMS are public-facing systems, they are obvious targets for hackers. Without proper protections against vulnerabilities, the integrity of the site - as well as the users' data - is in peril.

Flexible CMSs on the other hand prioritise security, and protect the website against hacking and data breaches. As developers can integrate systems without veering off best practice, they can ensure that security standards are met, and are able to withstand penetration tests. In a world of frequent and unpredictable security attacks, even open-source systems must match the security provisions of their commercial equivalents.

High cost of integration and support services

Scope aside, inflexible systems have a rather high Total Cost of Ownership [TCO]. Websites built on such systems may have been inexpensive to launch - whilst requirements were simple - but owners find that the cost rises dramatically for integrations and other advanced use cases, as well as ongoing support.

Websites built with a flexible CMS in contrast offer a considerably lower TCO over the years, as integrations come natural and best practice implementation makes them easier to support. Finally, owing to their open architecture, flexible CMSs take longer before they need a rebuild, which underlines their advantageous TCO.

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How open architecture enables systems to communicate with each

> **"In a flexible CMS everything is done using APIs so integrations are ubiquitous, seamless and secure"**
>
> Kevin Stivens, Senior Developer

Integrations are performed using something called an API (Application Programming Interface). Quite simply, this is a "socket" in a system that allows another to "plug-in", enabling secure data exchanges. (Taking the analogy further, you can think of a standard electricity socket as the API that integrates your kettle with the grid).

The "open architecture" in a flexible CMS means that everything is done using APIs - including its internal components. Under such a model, it is easy to visualise that integrations are ubiquitous, seamless and secure. More importantly, as the system is built around APIs, it encourages developers to follow best practices.

In stark contrast, inflexible CMSs need to be fitted with APIs by the developers which is sometimes done haphazardly. Some CMSs rely on 3rd party add-ons for this functionality, however this may expose the website to quality and upgradability issues as owners have no leverage over the developers.

How a flexible platform delivers connectivity with CRMs

In the previous section we discussed how a digital strategy can only be delivered by the broad connectivity options provided by a flexible CMS platform. To illustrate the point, consider the common use case of integrating your website to a CRM. Most websites include a contact form, and best practice is to pass on submissions to the CRM as Leads, for storage, marketing automation and onward handling.

Even this simple use case can be challenging if the CMS is not built using an open architecture. For example, the form fields might be "hard-coded" or not mapped properly, or the user input not validated - yielding a poor UX as well as an attack vulnerability. Equally, if the form is a based on a plugin, it might not even support your CRM.

A flexible CMS platform shrugs off these challenges. They include built-in Form designers, with proper field mappers, and security is enabled by default. Submissions are handled through organised workflows, which ensures support for all CRMs, not just common systems like Salesforce and MS Dynamics.

"Even simple use cases can be challenging if the CMS is not built on an open architecture. A flexible CMS shrugs off these challenges."

Conclusion

"To deliver a comprehensive digital strategy, you need a modern open-source CMS platform, with a flexible architecture"

You probably downloaded this guide because your organisation is mature enough to realise that a digital strategy goes beyond publishing. To deliver the experience your customers demand, your website must be able to connect to multiple systems seamlessly and in real-time.

This can be a challenge, if your CMS offers limited connectivity options. To deliver the digital strategy your organisation requires, you need a modern open-source CMS platform, with a flexible architecture that encourages best practices, and has low cost of ownership in the long run.

GrowCreate strongly recommends Umbraco CMS as the strongest, most flexible open-source CMS in the market today. As recognised specialists at the highest level [Umbraco Gold Partners], we have realised growth strategies for many clients over the years. With the right toolkit, and the right partner, the sky is the limit.

Is your current open-source CMS flexible enough to deliver your strategy?

Complete this maturity audit to find out.

Assess your CMS →