

Content Management Systems – Part 2: The Basic Requirements

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In Part 1 I gave you some real life examples of why CMS is not for everyone. If you read those and are still interested in a CMS, as I would gather from your reading of Part 2, then there may be a place for a new CMS under your tree this Christmas.

OK...lets be fair...If you have a lot of content changes going on, products turning over, articles and posts happening daily...congrats, you are in the 1% club. For you I strongly suggest implementing a well thought through CMS and having dedicated people trained to use it and to manage any SEO aspects.

The Basic Requirements

Should you decide that a CMS is still the right course for you here are a few things to look for when selecting one.

1. Meta tags – you should be able to custom create your own meta tags for each page.
2. H tags – Be sure you are able to assign H tags where you want them and are not stuck using them where the program says you should.
3. Basic on page SEO – At the very least you should have the ability to add, edit and link alt tags in images.
4. Ability to add text links, anywhere.
5. Ability to add new pages to a Sitemap,
6. Ability to submit new pages to Search Engines for expedited indexing.
7. Can you create your own file name for the page? i.e. **widget-cleaner.htm** vs. **featured_product.php?type_id=3**
8. Can you organize page structure and define navigation anyway you want?
9. Can you delete ALL of the pages created? Some auto create functions create pages you cannot delete. Bad news.
10. Does it have a tendency to create extra pages or versions of pages behind the scenes, like Word Press does?
11. Are the pages going to reside on your server or their server (very important it is on your server!)
12. Who updates things as the code base changes? The way code was written four years ago, or even two years ago, isn't how it is written today.
13. If you find you need the ability to do more than the current admin layout provides, can you? Where do you turn to upgrade the program?





These are the BARE minimums. In addition, you, or someone on staff, must have knowledge of what these are, how they work, how they should be used. Not a 30 minute class. You should KNOW and UNDERSTAND them and be able to converse about them intelligently and more importantly, implement them.

The Downside

I'll speak frankly, if you are not a website developer, do not have an SEO background or at least a working knowledge of the principles and current rules of SEO, and if your job duties only have you working with the CMS once a month or simply less than it takes to stay sharp, then you may expect one or more of the following to happen.

Your website will experience:

- A deterioration of your site's navigation
- Adherence to SEO will pretty much vanish
- Your code will likely fall out of date and your site will not work as well as you would like in various browsers.
- The quality of your site's appearance will degrade as short cuts with content are taken.
- A growing number of orphan pages which you have no idea are even there.
- A drop in search engine rankings

Oh, one more.....If you are lucky enough to have staff who understand what needs to be done you will never be able to terminate them for fear you will be left with a website you have no idea how to manage.

My Suggestion

Take a really honest look at how much you will need to do to the website each month. Ask several developers how much time that kind of work request will take or cost. Get an idea of what this is really worth to you. You might be surprised how affordable it is to have updates done professionally.

Then talk to those developers you are considering and ask their opinion, keeping in mind all the things you learned here. Some may agree with me, others will not, some will not care what is good for you, they just want to sell you a CMS. But, now you know some of the thing to watch for and to take into consideration. Make an educated decision, not an emotional one derived from what you hope to be true.



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