

## Content Management Systems – Part 1: Are they right for you?

By: Chris Bachman | July 22, 2014

Having a content management system (CMS) for your website is one of the most common requests I hear from new clients. Yet, in almost seven years of creating business websites we have very, very seldom implement CMS for any of our clients. Why is that?

First, some of the more common reasons I hear why they want a content management system in the first place.

- We don't want to have to call someone every time we need to make a change to something on our site.
- We don't want to have to pay for simple things like updates.
- I resent being taken advantage of with Maintenance fees. I mean, how hard can it be?
- I am going to write a lot of articles for this new blog I want to do and it makes sense to just do it myself.

There is a valid point in each of these reasons...then there is the reality.

### True Cases

I am going to share with you four examples, three from just the last few months, of clients who had at some point truly believed they needed a content management system.

#### Case #1(Brett) Unknown

Been through multiple website developers over the years. More than a few iterations of their site, including a CMS that was added somewhere along the way. Now they don't know where the CMS came from, how to service it, when it will be defunct(soon) or how to make it do the things they need it to do in order to correct their horrendous SEO profile, which has them lost in the great wastelands of SERPs(that's Search Engine Results Page for you newbies).

**Problem:** The CMS Brett was using wasn't a good one which would allow for proper implementation of SEO. This is one of the most common problems I see. The Content Management System provided to users is meant to give them the illusion of control when in fact it provides them the bare minimums and does so at great cost to performance. In this case, the program was also creating the site in a very search unfriendly file structure which is similar to building a house with a rotten foundation. At this point, the solution he is most likely facing is the complete rebuild of his website.





## Case#2(Kevin) Private CMS

His developer gave him a CMS for his site. He had no training in website development or SEO. When I came in I initially thought he had 15 pages, so did he. Turns out he had closer to 40 but nobody knew they were there, they weren't part of the navigation (which was very poor) and they were essentially invisible ghost pages. This was a perfect case of handing someone a tool they did not know how to properly use and which created a huge mess for them.

**Problem:** Great guy that Kevin is, he isn't a tech guy, at all. He is a super business person but is at a loss around much of today's technology. So, when he was turned loose with a shiny new CMS program he simply didn't understand how all the pieces needed to go together. This is very common. Just because you are a good business person doesn't mean you are an expert at all things.

## Case#3 (Cynthia) WP

Someone set her up with a WP site. Not a very good job... After digging into it I found about 85 pages including numerous duplicates, ones with one sentence, some with nothing. I evaluated the pages and she had maybe 6 which were usable, 10 more which could be salvaged with some work and the rest were "garbage" pages. She had a mess and suspected it, she just needed someone to call it what it was, a problem.

**Problem:** No plan, no control, no understanding of websites and is trying to deal with a hundred other issues with life and her business. Things just got away from her, and quickly. Out of control websites and blogs are an all too common occurrence we see. Have an idea? Throw it on the website. Want to share a blog? Why not?...let everyone play with it. Don't understand why all the pages aren't flowing smoothly and giving off that warm professional glow? Well, that's why you hire a pro.

## Case #4 (Dr. B ) Blog!

Classic case, Brian calls me up and says he wants to add a blog to his website. He is passionate about finally sitting down to write the articles and posts he has been dreaming of for several years. He is sure he will write at least one per week and wants to have a blog to post them on without bothering me each time.... Fair enough.

**Problem:** Brian's was an easy problem to spot coming and head off at the pass. And my response to him was the one I give most everyone wanting to blog. You need to have something worthwhile to say, at least 1-2x per week, it needs to be written in an engaging manner, optimized to a specific topic, organized into logical, optimized categories and then you need to maintain this performance indefinitely. I suggested to Brian that we test things for a few months and see how many articles he could produce. We would begin by organizing them on the site, as separate pages, in a logical fashion so as to make it easy for people to find them. This would accomplish everything he was after and provide a much healthier SEO environment than a poorly managed blog. If he was in fact writing as many as he hoped to then I would be the first one to help him get a blog in place. ...update: three years later Brian has produced a total of six articles and they look very nice in his block of articles on the site. He saved himself a ton of stress and the articles he wrote are ranking better than they would in a blog because of the controlled SEO.



So, from a next to useless program, to inexperience, poor planning and unrealistic dreams, having your own content management system is clearly not all you might hope it would be. While it is tempting to jump on the WordPress band wagon, or make use of a free website builder program, or even hire a developer to implement a custom CMS for you, just remember, there are no free rides. To paraphrase an old saying, “If you think using a professional developer is expensive, wait until you use a “build-it-yourself” site.

Btw – WordPress fans...please do not swamp me with hate mail. I really do like WP for a lot of reasons. My issue is only that in the hands of the untrained WP can wreak a lot of havoc on your relationship with a search engine as well as waste an awful lot of someone’s time who could be more productive doing something else. The internet is littered with the carcasses of well intended blogs, is it not?

## **NEXT TIME: CMS – Part 2: The basic requirements**



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