

RevenFlo CMS asks:

Is an Open Source
Content Management System
Right for Your University,
College, or K12 School/District?

Please read this report
BEFORE writing your RFP!
(or at least before hiring a vendor)

Introduction

Thank you for downloading this free report. **RevenFlo CMS** specializes in designing, developing, customizing, implementing, and servicing of content management systems for institutions like yours.

Before you get to hiring anybody, though, and even before you write your RFP, you are wise to seek more information about:

- Information Management
- Content Management Systems
- Open Source
- Service Models
- and more

To begin, I suggest we take a look at your needs and desires. Then we can establish some goals and objectives.

The Need and The Purpose

Our clients usually come to us with one of two motivations:

- to more effectively **market and brand** the institution
- to more efficiently **manage information** and web content

Regardless of the central motivation, we are usually addressing both needs. So, what is the source of such motivations? What should be the overall goal of such activity?

Through our experience we have found that regardless of your institution's place in the world of education (k12 to doctorate, private or public, technical or liberal arts), you share a common goal: **to increase participation of stakeholders.**

Stakeholders may include:

- Students
- Parents
- Faculty
- Staff
- Administration
- Board members
- Business Community
- Community At-Large
- Pier Institutions
- Potential Hires
- Media/Press
- and more

Thus, whether you came here out of a concern for **information management** or a concern for **marketing and branding**, either way, you are driven by the desire to inspire and facilitate communications and data sharing among a certain audience.

Communication is king. In our personal relationships, good and fruitful communication is about listening and being open and a spirit of cooperation and a belief in synergy. Yet, traditionally with institutions, communication is about dissemination of information from the top - with support and grumblings underneath.

New forms of systemized communications, brought on by the world of the web and specifically Web 2.0, have begun to change the way we think about how an institution communicates with an audience and within its own walls.

Along with new technologies have come new creative, skilled, and administrative tasks to capitalize on the benefits the technologies can bring an institution in its growth and management.

These tasks are often expensive (time is money) when compared with the return. Thus,

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{better ways to communicate} \\ & \quad + \\ & \text{better systems by which to facilitate communication} \\ & \quad = \\ & \text{significant increase in return on investment} \end{aligned}$$

Here, of course, return is generally defined as an increased participation from stakeholders. The resulting specifics may be:

- Increased competitive enrollment
- Increased dollars
- Increased competitive professional recruitment
- and more

A well planned and well designed content management system is the **clearest and most direct investment** you can make to get the largest return for your investment in communications.

Along with the inherent goal of growth, a university, college, school, or district also faces a list of **difficulties in information management**. These difficulties are a reality already even if relatively minimal activities are being conducted.

A new communications initiative, as crucial as it is, means increased activity on the part of staff and vendors (again, time is money).

Therefore, a well designed content management system must not only be a tool to achieve your goal of increased participation, but it must also serve to increase efficiency in information management.

Information Management

From Wikipedia:

Information management (IM) is the collection and management of information from one or more sources and the distribution of that information to one or more audiences. This sometimes involves those who have a stake in, or a right to that information. Management means the organization of and control over the structure, processing and delivery of information. In short, information management entails organizing, retrieving, acquiring and maintaining information.

Undoubtedly, you are participating in a complex system of information management. The level at which your organization recognizes this fact and attempts to improve this system will vary, but you can't escape it. Information has to be collected, processed, packaged and delivered on a regular basis for any organization to function.

Content Management Systems

A content management system (CMS) is essentially a website, a database, an intranet, and an interface (software-like) for managing, editing, and publishing content.

A CMS can be an enterprise-wide data management solution or it can serve as a branding and marketing website or it can be a blog. Usually, a CMS is what it needs to be for the users.

A quality CMS will provide:

- Strategic Design for Marketing and Branding
- Exceptional User Experience
- Efficient Information Management
- Access to Evolving Technology

Strategic Design for Marketing and Branding

Strategic design for marketing and branding is an important aspect of your content management system (and may be your central motivation in reading this report). Yet, even if you are more interested in internal information management, you should still consider the effects of strategic design when implementing a system used by staff.

Look for a system that is visually appealing and brand appropriate (to match your overall marketing strategy and brand, even if internally). Seek uniformity of visual brand with visual variations only when appropriate and for communicative purposes.

Exceptional User Experience

The effectiveness of a content management system lies predominantly in the user experience. Keep in mind that the user is a visitor to your website, but also the administrators of your site. Users can include "members" and "publishers" and "editors" and "administrators" and more. These titles represent permissions that control what a user experiences while at the site.

Your site should have a well designed information architecture and intuitive navigation experience, with traditional navigation menus and Web 2.0 style personalization options including tagging, sharing, blogging, forums, wikis, etc.

Along with textual, image, video, and audio content, you will probably need calendars with filtering and RSS notification,

staff/member directories and e-mail subscription services, an archive center and resource directory, news announcement widgets, integrated site search, automated site mapping and crumb display, interactive mashup maps, online application systems, and postings such as jobs, bids, schedules, etc.

Content Management

The whole purpose is to ramp up and focus your content creation and sharing system. So, keep in mind that you will have more on your plate in terms of communications activities, but you should have a more efficient and effective tool by which to do these activities.

You will want the ability for non-technical user to:

- Log in and edit directly from web interface
- Update calendar listings, menus, redirects, time-stamping, banners, rotating content, teasers, etc.
- Manage and create documents, email subscriptions, newsletters, and online forms
- Convert files to PDF
- Store, access, and disseminate content to various groups of users based on permissions

You will also want quality reporting features:

- Visitor reports – by page, source, keywords, activity, time on site, physical geography and more
- Conversion statistics – defined actions for visitors to take (filling out a form, signing up for something, etc.)

Access to Evolving Technology

You don't want to make an investment in a tool that will become obsolete before you've even received full return on your investment. Therefore, it's good to invest in systems that are more fluid in the

world of changing technology and less rigid in their proprietary structure. We only work in Open Source technologies for this very reason.

Open Source

Open Source is a movement (predominantly online) towards the free access to knowledge and tools – a community of contributors adding to the development of a tool or system, free for any interested party to access, alter, and contribute.

The most prevalent community of open source practitioners is in the world of software and web application development. Think about Microsoft Office for a minute. Think of what a wonderful and powerful software application it is and how many businesses have it integrated into their models. Think of QuickBooks and the amount of good it has done the small business. These are wonderful applications.

Now imagine if the general community of developers and entrepreneurs around the world was given access to the core code of these applications, and each encouraged to innovate, to download them for free and change them in whatever creative way they can, to introduce plug-ins and add-ons to solve real problems. This is open source.

Obviously one cannot do these things with MS Office and QuickBooks. But one can do them with Wordpress and Drupal and myriad others.

Many organizations in both the private and public sector, from small local organizations to national ones, have adopted Open Source technologies and have found much success in the model.

One of the wonderful benefits of working with an Open Source content management system is the rigorous and prolific open source community that supports the software. New versions of such software are released consistently with easy upgrade, and plugins for added

features are being developed, tested, and vetted continuously all around the world.

For just about anything that you can think of that you would like your website to be able to do from a visitor experience point of view and/or from an information management point of view, we can either find an existing plugin or create one ourselves. We can make a website do anything that will improve your organization.

Drupal

From PRWeb:

All Press Releases for October 31, 2008

Drupal Wins Best Overall 2008 Open Source CMS Award for Second Year in a Row

Drupal community and contributors win multiple awards for open source CMS innovation and leadership

Berchem, Belgium (PRWEB) October 31, 2008 -- The Drupal Association today announced that Drupal has won two prestigious Packt Publishing 2008 Open Source CMS Awards this week - the Overall 2008 Open Source CMS Award and the Best PHP Open Source CMS. This marks the second consecutive year that Drupal has won Packt Publishing's Overall Open Source CMS award. In addition, on Monday, Packt Publishing recognized leading Drupal contributor Earl Miles as a 2008 Open Source CMS Most Valued Person (MVP).

"To win the Best Open Source CMS Award two years in a row is quite an achievement for Drupal," said Damian Carvill, Packt Spokesman. "In what were extremely close categories, with high quality finalists, Drupal's strength and power shone through for the judges. Particular praise was reserved for the development team's dedication to improving Drupal alongside building a loyal and passionate community, that has enabled its growth, adoption and advocacy. Congratulations from Packt both to the development team and to the community!"

Working together, the Drupal community is building the future of the dynamic web so that anyone can quickly build great social publishing websites.

The Packt Publishing awards highlight the growing impact the open source Drupal social publishing system is having on the content management system (CMS) market, specifically with a growing number of case studies in vertical industries such as media and entertainment companies, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations. Drupal usage has grown exponentially in recent years with more than 2 million downloads and an estimated 250,000 Drupal websites worldwide. The Drupal community includes more than 350,000 registered members on Drupal.org.

What is Drupal?

From Drupal.org:

About Drupal

The Drupal social publishing system has been downloaded

over 2 million times since its inception, and project growth has doubled annually for several years. Drupal is used to deliver a wide variety of application types including single or multi-user blogs, wikis, community networks, digital media portals, and content management systems.

Assisted by a thriving ecosystem of consultants and developers, a diverse list of organizations are using Drupal including SonyBMG, Warner Brothers Records, New York Observer, Forbes, The Onion, Harvard University, and Amnesty International. A huge community has grown up around Drupal, with thousands of active contributors to the open source technology, including nearly 2000 community-developed modules for extending Drupal functionality.

For more information, please visit <http://drupal.org>.

Along with being used by municipalities, Drupal is making a name for itself in many categories in both the public and private sectors.

From Drupal.org:

Drupal Case Studies

Drupal meets the needs of different types of web sites from community to news portals, from corporate sites to educational institutions, from media sites to international sites. Here are some case studies that showcase some of the ways Drupal has been applied:

Community Portal Sites If you want a news web site where the stories are provided by the audience, Drupal suits your needs well. Incoming stories are automatically voted upon by the audience and the best stories bubble up to the home page. Bad stories and comments are automatically hidden

after enough negative votes. Examples: Fast Company | Team Sugar | Kerneltrap

News Publishing Drupal is great for newspapers and other news organizations. Examples: New York Observer (implementation info here) | Savannah Now | NowPublic | Popular Science

Aficionado Sites Drupal flourishes when it powers a portal web site where one person shares their expertise and enthusiasm for a topic. Examples: ia/ | Dirtbike

Intranet/Corporate Web Sites Companies maintain their internal and external web sites in Drupal. Drupal works well for these uses because of its flexible permissions system, and its easy web based publishing. No longer do you have to wait for a webmaster to get the word out about your latest project. Examples: AOL Corporate | Yahoo! Research

Resource Directories If you want a central directory for a given topic, Drupal suits your needs well. Users can register and suggest new resources while editors can screen their submissions. Example: Entomology Index

International Sites When you begin using Drupal, you join a large international community of users and developers. Thanks to the localization features within Drupal, there are many Drupal sites implemented in a wide range of languages. Examples: PuntBarra | cialog

Education Drupal can be used for creating dynamic learning communities to supplement the face-to-face classroom or as a platform for distance education classes. Academic professional organizations benefit from its interactive

features and the ability to provide public content, member-only resources, and member subscription management.
Examples: WPA | Amherst College | e-Learning Institute

Art, Music, Multimedia When it comes to community art sites, Drupal is a great match. No other platform provides the rock solid foundation that is needed to make multimedia rich websites that allow users to share, distribute, rate, and discuss their work with others of similar interest. As time goes on, Drupal will only develop stronger support for audio, video, images, and playlist content for use in multimedia applications. Examples: MTV United Kingdom | Sony Music | Terminus1525 | Project Opus | Warner Brothers records | Ads of the World | Vocalo.org

Social networking sites Drupal has many of common features used in social networking sites. You can build a collection of social networking applications around for your site or use Drupal as a white label social networking service.
Examples: imbee | GoingOn | Jewcy | DrupalSN

Course of Action

So what do you do now? You have much to do that only you can know. You know the steps you need to take in terms of communicating with the powers that be in your institution.

In terms of your goals and objectives, you will likely be motivated by one of the following two motivations:

- Marketing and branding
- Information management

Regardless, the Project will be to develop and launch a content management system that will function as an information management AND

marketing/branding tool to greatly enhance website visitor experience and information management productivity.

What will you need?

1. You will need a team of Web professionals to help you develop, customize, and integrate a content management system.
2. Settle on one strategic design that will be consistent throughout the site (with variations where appropriate)
3. Describe an architecture built on user-friendliness and that will allow growth of content without degradation to user experience
4. Install and develop Drupal (the open source content management system) to function as described by the strategic design and architecture
5. Port, reorganize, and revisit content existing in current sites for publication into new system
6. Configure servers for handling the new system
7. Tutor appropriate individuals for usage

Contact RevenFlo CMS

To learn more or to schedule a consultation, please contact us.

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