

BUSINESS CASE

Content management solutions lower the costs of updating internal and external Web sites by allowing non-technical staff to securely create and contribute content to the Web site. This can help a company build a more useful, relevant, popular, and up-to-date Web site with lower overall operating expenses than a site that can only be updated by technical personnel.

More robust content management solutions often include document management functionality that extends across all business-related documents created within an organization, but the main focus of CM applications in recent years has been on Web content. Businesses can more immediately realize both increased customer satisfaction and sales as richer, more timely information is made available via company Web sites through the effective use of content management.

Most leading Web content management applications include approval-workflow features so that content can be properly vetted prior to being published to the Web. Better Web content management applications also offer the ability for content to be re-packaged and re-purposed for presentation on a wide range of non-PC Internet access devices such as personal digital assistants (PDAs), cell phones, and other non-PC platforms, in addition to enabling repurposing of information for more traditional data presentation forms such as paper-published reports.

Of course you shouldn't be considering these (or any) applications in a vacuum. Analyze them in terms of what your business requirements are, as well as your basic specifications for expected number of users, required levels of approval, desired schedule of content updates, and budget. And don't be afraid to stop and ask yourself one question: What do you want content management to do for you, or how do you expect to use it to competitive advantage? Answer this question before proceeding or any implementation is doomed to failure. If you think you already have some answers to this question, a rapid application analysis methodology is provided at the end of this paper for you to analyze viable CM candidates based on your requirements.

LEADING CONTENT MANAGEMENT APPLICATIONS TODAY

The following applications are the leaders in content management in their respective price category today. This analysis was conducted by identifying and selecting leading document management application candidates from a review of various popular, technical, and trade publications from the last three years. Sources include IDG.net (InfoWorld, Computerworld, JavaWorld, PCWorld, SunWorld, ITWorld, etc.), InternetWorld, ZDnet (eWeek, InteractiveWeek, PC Magazine, etc.), and vertical-industry technology publications such as the Law News Network (law.com), Law Technology News, and Bank Technology News. Additional sources include content management analyses employing standard requirements matrices that were performed for specific clients seeking specific solutions. Final selections for this article were made based on averaging the recommended application(s) scoring highest on the collected matrices.

Almost all of these applications require an investment encompassing software, outside service provider help for set-up and configuration, and varying degrees of ongoing IT support:

High-End Solutions (\$150K-\$1M average total implementation costs)

- **Vignette:** Recommended for organizations interested in strong personalization and marketing features as well as full-featured content management. Additional requirements are a big budget and a commitment to changing internal processes as necessary to switch to such a robust, all-encompassing enterprise-wide CM application.

- **Interwoven:** Recommended for organizations with complex workflows and geographically-disparate Web content contributors. Not as pricey as Vignette, and reportedly easier to install and configure.

Mid-Market Solutions (\$20K-\$100K average total implementation costs)

- **Openpages' ContentWare Suite:** Especially recommended for organizations that need to convert files from desktop publishing packages such as QuarkXPress and Adobe InDesign, but suitable for almost any mid-sized businesses looking to take control of their Web site.
- **Documentum 4i:** A strong Web content management component has been added to an application that for many years has been one of the single best "pure" content management applications, especially for organizations with an existing document collection and/or document-based processes. Strong multi-platform support (i.e. preparing data for presentation on Web, mobile phone, PDA , etc.). Integrates well with BEA Transaction Server for high-end e-commerce sites.
- **Microsoft's Sharepoint Server:** Microsoft's acquisition of CM vendor NCompass Labs and their previous application forms the core of the company's new CM offering. It's on the high end for Microsoft, but a decent value in terms of functionality offered at around \$50K. If you're already a Microsoft shop (and willing to stay one), it's definitely worth a look.

Low-End Solutions (\$2K-\$20K average total implementation costs)

- **WebSite Director:** The leading low-end application currently available--in fact one of the only real under-\$5K installable software options available on the market today. Don't be surprised at the relative dearth of functionality, though it handles the basics well.
- **UpdateThis.com:** This content management ASP is recommended for organizations on a limited budget that don't need high-end features such as multiple delivery platforms.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS: EXTENSIBILITY

Don't just buy a content management to suit your current requirements. Plan ahead to consider possible future requirements as well. Any chance your Web site might be done in different languages in the future? If so, consider how cost-effective it would be to have the translators contribute their content for approval and then have it routed right to the Web site. Of course you'll need a CM package with good access controls and granular rights levels to meet these needs.

Other considerations include Search requirements—if being able to Search past and present content is important to you, be sure to find out what search functionality, if any, is included with the content management application. If you've got the time, money, and need, additional search technology options may bear further consideration as well. Search applications worth consideration include Excalibur Technologies' RetrievalWare, Inktomi, and Verity's high-end offerings.

SELECTING THE BEST CONTENT MANAGEMENT APPLICATION FOR YOU

1. Make up a list with all your content management needs, real or imagined. Then whittle your list down to only the things you really need. Work with others on it.
2. Put the remaining requirements into a table; this will be your Requirements Matrix. Don't forget "standard" entries for other factors worthy of consideration such as Vendor Status, Platform Requirements, and Programming Interface (including forms-based customization).
3. Select two to four applications in your budget category. Check any of the sources noted on page 1 for additional viable candidates and information as desired.
4. Read any reviews about each application you can find, check the vendor's Web site, and demo any application candidate available to see if/how it addresses your requirements.
5. The winning application for you is the one that fills the most requirements on your Requirements Matrix and suits your budget, implementation timeline, and IT environment.