



White Paper
Web Content Manager Challenges

Nivaria Innova

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01. Introduction to WCM Challenges

More than 80% of the information that the educated workforce uses can be defined as “unstructured,” whether referring to email, Office documents, images, multimedia content, video, or PDF documents. On the other hand, the greater part of transactional content of each individual or company is structured. Information is found in repositories and/or databases of different creators and should be managed and integrated in operations and knowledge processes.

Building upon this notion, there are several points to highlight:

- The annual rate of knowledge growth in a company is 200%.
- Each time more individuals and companies work in the network, users can access additional information depending on their levels of privilege and by operating only on this information.
- It is necessary to guarantee both access controls and the traceability of all workflows and processes.
- The information tends to be managed in collaborative environments, sharing, publishing, and distributing knowledge through Intranets, portals and different devices.

It is obvious that content creation, integration, editing, management, distribution and publishing requires the application of resources and the creation of a budget. However, above all, for projects to be successful they should have low technological risk and minimal risk of obsolescence.

The chosen solution is extremely important in order to reach success. Throughout this document, we will try to present these key points. Also, it is essential to have internal and external teamwork, because any project is worth as much as its weakest link in the production chain.

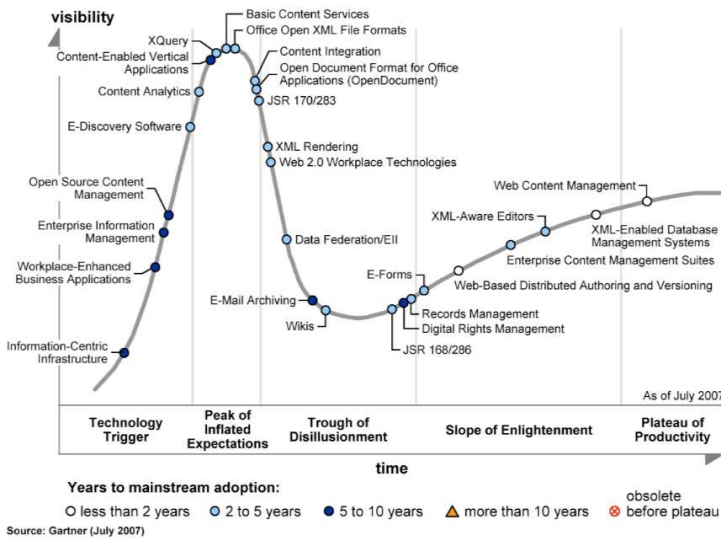


02. Technologies involved in content management solutions

Solutions have become increasingly complex with requirements from industry standards and new technologies.

As you can see in the following graph by Gartner, there are many technologies involved at different levels of maturity or implantation with increasingly consolidated standards.

Figure 1. Hype Cycle for Content Management, 2007



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Gartner

The hope for a scalable and sound solution is vital to guarantee the future sustainability of the content management model.

03. A strategy for three different worlds

Until now, it has been common for WCM acquisitions to be carried out by the IT department, focused in the automation of processes to create and edit content. The objective has been, and should continue to be, to improve the efficiency of information technology and to reduce general costs.

However, in the present day, as we rely on third generation WCM systems, it is very probable that what we determine new investments, is also a line-of-business for the organization. This involves the IT department acting in a very familiar role to the service provider. This evolution requires that the business executes the highest and most profound strategies, and hence, to think of the WCM investment from a new perspective.

The group of a company that needs to make an investment in WCM should consider some key points, especially taking into account that regarding Web policy, the company will operate in three environments: Intranet, Extranet (for clients and partners) and the public Website.

The three environments will incorporate the need to persuade (Websites), to inform and to make decisions (Extranet), and to provide functional support for internal processes of the business (Intranet). Three different design strategies could be required, involving display and communication, but it is important to consider the possibility of a common platform that it is scalable to guarantee interoperability.

In the following image, you can see that, these three environments often exist together in the business framework or in the same project with various actors.



03.1. Corporate Web Portal: Persuasive Content

WCM strategies directed to the general public are focused on the conversion of casual website visitors into prospects (identified users), as well as the conversion of prospects into clients. The focus must be persuasive and the design is paramount.

The Marketing Department usually deals with the maintenance of these sites. Their focus should be based both on appearance and the facilitation of navigation, since visitors may only have intrinsic motives to be there. This requires a very strong focus in the editing capacities and flexibility in design. For leaders, valuable analytic support should be included to understand the behavior of users. The content is to be published in a suitable way, according to these visitors' experiences and feedback. Also, this is the place for 'rich media' like Flash, in order to tell stories or to make a site be visually dynamic and interesting. Allow the visitors to register easily with the marketing or sales department, although other types of services and avenues also are becoming more common.

03.2. Extranet: Informative and Operational Content

Within a client's extranet, the entity is interested in the client services and operational support in the organization. The objective is to inform, through marketing such as branding, cross-sales promotions, communication, and making the website attractive and easy to use. The integration of a 'contact-center' and CRM systems with an effective search engine are necessary functions in any system used in this application. Real-time analytics are less important due to the fact that visitors are connected and identified by internal records. However, visitor activities should be tracked to determine objectives and evaluate customer satisfaction. Support and operations directors also often look for applications to develop within the community such as blogs and other tracking options that monitor when visitors develop into active participants.

03.3. Intranet: Productive Content

The principal objective of an Intranet is to increase productivity, with the users being employees of your own company. Support and integration processes here are fundamental applications and the activity on the site is mostly bidirectional. Much of the content and many of the activities may already have the support of portals or Enterprise Content Management (ECM) systems. The specific WCM necessities should be satisfied, even if it uses a separate application. The planning should be focused on the content portability, Web access, quick navigation, usability, and the elimination of extra work for highly dedicated users.

04. General requirements of corporate web portals

The corporate site is the public face of a company and, therefore, should reflect public relations, brand management, marketing, sales, and client and shareholder relations. Therefore, a Web Content Management (WCM) focus, as far as the output channels (publication and distribution) are concerned, is divided between delivering value through accessible content (conforming to accessibility standards), and persuasive content client conversion. From a functional perspective, the usability and power of your editing capability can obtain the maximum utility and efficiency as a marketing tool.

The principal objective is to communicate and persuade in support of the company's marketing and sales strategy, including direct transactions with clients (in this case, the solution acquires the character of an extranet in many aspects).

It is necessary to understand that website visitor profiles are vastly diverse. Given that the majority are anonymous visitors, their behaviors should be studied through analytical procedures and from the user experience that company contributes to the site. Moreover, one must keep in mind that at any time, any user can be visiting the site for the first time. Therefore, the design, navigation, architecture, and usability of the site must be made with the assumption that the user knows nothing about the company and the site. The keys are easy navigation and an attractive design. Since there is no opportunity to train users, if we do not effectively send our message initially, we may not have a second opportunity.

Visitors can also arrive to the site from a variety of navigators, through an unknown bandwidth, perhaps speaking various languages. On the other hand, the presence of client plug-ins and other support systems cannot be taken for granted. Websites that comply with accessibility standards, use low bandwidths and implement multi-language versions perform well and will create the best user-experience.

As described previously, the content of public sites are, in general, the responsibility of the marketing department. Although the contribution is extended throughout the business, it is helpful to have final approval centralized in one place. Everything on the site will have a public relations impact and should have a consistent corporate tone.

The language of the Web Portal should be a key aspect, as it is very relevant to making the decision of which methodology the solution requires. One should consider the complexity that arises from the fact that from across three different axes, the user should be able to visualize content:

- Globalization: A portal destined for various countries or for various target markets. Each country can have the same content or not (localization).
- Localization: A country can have different content in the same language as the matrix solution. A country should have local or regional scope.
- Translation: Different countries use the same language, and the one country can have many.
- Personalization: Ultimately the content to be presented should be, as noted, a result of applying three criteria, each time for a unique profile.

The management of the creation > editing > testing > publication cycle is vital, especially within Intranets. Here, they have a much higher range of contributors, but in general, less strict processes in content selection.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO), which involves the use of tools and strategies to raise the volume of search hits, is a great value that must facilitate WCM solutions to allow Marketing to adopt strategies to guarantee that pages are positioned adequately. In this sense, it is also helpful to integrate with third-parties of search and analysis tools as it is an important differentiator for product evaluation.

Accessibility in many cases is a legal matter, referencing the 508 Act in the USA or the 34/2002 Services of the Information Society and Electronic Commerce Services Law (LSSICE) in Spain. The challenge is to create clean code that complies to legislation and, above all, makes the web accessible even to people with disabilities. If you are more than 40 years old it is possible that you may have farsightedness and will appreciate reading text effortlessly.

The scope and scale of websites are in constant growth, but in general, they have less content than internal sites. Public websites may contain thousands of pages compared to hundreds of thousands pages that are accessed through corporative sites. This calls for storage and repository requirements that have to harmonize with the fact that sites are becoming increasingly persuasive. It requires content to be the most granular as possible, powerful management of the taxonomy, and a user interface with the editing power to create, select, and show content during execution. In general, the combination with analytic tools will form a pattern to improve the user experience.

05. General requirements of corporate Intranets

An Intranet should integrate and support a great range of content as well as the employee activities, as if it were a public place. The Intranet of a company is made up of their own workers, and the primary concern is centered on improving productivity through content available that they provide. This idea is powered by having access to all necessary information to accelerate and optimize business processes. An important feature for content on the Intranet and process elements can be the friendly competition of operational departments, such as human resources and organization. Some examples are training on corporate policy and procedures, such as self-help features including trip expenses, presentation of reports, planning, projects, trips and vacations.

From a design perspective, the Intranet has some advantages on corporate websites (besides the fact that its users are supposed to be there). Often, users that access the site understand the structure and their reason for being there. They have a common navigator and a suite of support software, with access to training. The limitations of the infrastructure are known and, in general, are more robust than the final users that access through the Internet. On the other hand, administrators of websites can wait to listen to users if the site is not reaching desired results.

However, in some aspects, intranets are more demanding than public sites. It is important to provide facilities to users for whom the site is used constantly, but, on the other hand, the results should be great. If an attractive appearance is less important, the facilitation and coherence of navigation are fundamental. One of the objectives of the site is to rationalize business processes. In the last decade, between the expectations of interested parties in all departments, locations and lines of business, webmasters have come to a conclusion. The goals include bringing the user experience (appearance, navigation, helping users, risk in general), the content policies and the contribution control all to higher levels. A majority of companies have started a transition toward a "template" model of development of the Intranet that provides "sufficient" support within general costs and quality control.

The productivity of an Intranet can be strengthened beyond ECM and WCM through CEVA (Content Enabling Vertical Applications) and WEBA (Workplace Enhancing Business Applications). Before CEVA, complete processes required employees to find their documents manually and create corporative Web applications. CEVA helps to reduce management costs and optimize the rest of the work through the application of better processes, controls and analytics. WEBA is very closely related to CEVA but combines and optimizes interactions between people and processes. Both integrate collaboration functions, presence awareness, unstructured search, messaging and management of content with applications of a business line. It is especially oriented to the management of knowledge and collaboration.

06. Summary

For all these reasons, and despite the differences of the environments, the separation of the Intranet and the corporate website is rarely beneficial.

Businesses, either from their functional units or from the IT department, should adapt WCM investments to complete specific requirements of the business. The fundamental goal is to reduce costs, particularly sales and general and administration costs. The generation of benefits will also be included as a target. The conversion of users into clients, sales support and increased value can lead to loyalty and retention of clients in key areas.

We should not forget that objectives of the business unit to which the site promotes the strategy contrasts with the operational requirements that are determined for the necessities of the visitors.

When it is possible, invite clients to take a poll to determine the "necessary," "convenient," and "unnecessary" features.

The interface should be a Rich Internet Application (RIA) without the harm of the accessibility of the site. Content should be in multiple formats and videos should be visible and downloadable. If one wants to facilitate the download, the user's bandwidth should be considered.

The acquired solution should be scalable, especially the CEVA concept. Many of the things that were made with different tools and platforms, are made today with CEVA to guarantee the return on investment (ROI) and to reduce development and deployment times.

It is a multi-platformed solution based in Java and industry standards with guaranteed minimum risk of obsolescence and full investment protection.

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Teléfono +34 902 15 14 27

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