

Six Reasons Why an Open Source CMS May Not Be Right for Your Business

When making decisions about a new website, selecting the Content Management System (CMS) may be far down your list of concerns. You may even leave this decision up to your developer and won't ever discuss CMS selection as part of the project plan. Many developers use an open source CMS because they're free, familiar, and fall into the "devil I know" category. They're based on a familiar technological platform, and your developer has already figured-out the system hiccups as well as how to work around them. In this analysis, ongoing needs are often not given enough weight, including how easy the system is to use, update, and expand. More importantly, a CMS should never limit whether your site can evolve to meet changing business needs. Nor should you be "chained to IT" or worse yet, forced to hire outside developers to implement simple changes. These factors make selecting the right CMS essential. While a "free" CMS may be fine to launch the project, here are six reasons why choosing an open source CMS may not be the right long-term solution.

1 Usability

Non-techies should be able to edit, create, and publish content without engaging IT. Sitefinity's intuitive and easy to use interface makes that an everyday reality. Open source content management systems are designed by engineers for engineers. Those with technical backgrounds easily understand how to build, maintain, and expand an open source CMS. If that's not you, you're not alone. Many **non-technical staff struggle to manage content** via open source CMS'. Even simple tasks become a time drain. That's why Sitefinity was designed with usability in mind. Sitefinity has a dedicated User Experience Team that designed the interface from the ground up. They're always guided by what the user needs to accomplish on a given screen, so the result is a clean interface that displays only the most relevant buttons and hints.

2 Ongoing Costs: Free Can Be Expensive

When factoring the total cost of ownership—which includes routine maintenance and content updates—chances are a commercial CMS would save you money. Launching your website is only the beginning. The ongoing development costs required when working with many open source platforms go from free to expensive in short order. That's why it's important to consider the frequency and type of content updates you'll need before choosing a CMS. Many of the open source add-on's you'll want to use to make your site unique and function as desired cost money. Further, the steep learning curve for many open source solutions means that work not done in-house will need to be paid for. In contrast, Sitefinity has an extremely intuitive and user friendly interface, making it easy for a wide cross-section of staff to create and publish content without having to hire consultants or engage IT resources.

3 Return on Investment (ROI)

When evaluating the true value of a CMS, it's important to recognize the financial savings yielded from staff efficiency. With superior usability and advanced features such as multilingual, ecommerce, and template based publishing, Sitefinity gives non-technical staff the freedom to easily create and edit content on their own. A study by the Center for Information Development and Management (CIDM) found that there were many ways a good CMS can save an organization money. In most cases, it pays for itself within a year or less after full implementation. CIDM found savings from: writing and editing content, searching for content and digital assets, translating content into other languages and managing it thereafter, converting data, shorting production times, developing new revenue streams, and supporting clients¹. Savings for Enterprise clients building their own systems is even greater. For them, efficient use of IT resources can result in personnel savings of \$US 200, 000 or more even for small web content management deployments². Examples of this abound. In one case, a company rejected a \$150,000 commercial CMS, choosing instead to embark on a three year \$700,000 custom CMS programming odyssey that was later abandoned because of poor usability. They ended-up returning to a professional CMS³. The take away: time saved is money saved, so efficiency and usability should be chief considerations when evaluating a CMS. Sitefinity saves you both time and money.

4 Technical Support

Open source platforms are developed and managed by a world-wide community of developers. It's a complicated matrix of features and ideas with no one in charge. That can be a strength, but if you are a business with a question, you're in trouble. If you're handy, you can post a question to a forum and hope for an answer. But more likely than not, the solution will involve coding beyond your comfort zone. Consequently, once your site is developed, businesses using open source are on their own for technical support unless they pay for it. While you can contract for open source technical support, often it's more expensive than paying for a CMS and getting support included (one of those penny wise, pound foolish scenarios...). Alternatively, Sitefinity offers technical support to all customers within clearly identified response times. Answers come from the product team, or the support officers that sit next to them, so your projects get back on track quickly. You won't get that kind of service from open source unless you pay for it.

6 SEO

Presumably, the #1 goal of your website is to be found. Once that happens, you can generate business, prospects, or awareness for your organization by those searching for information. This makes Search Engine Optimization (SEO) a chief consideration when selecting a CMS. But is it usually? Sitefinity has tools to help users easily maximize their SEO opportunities. For instance, your pages will be ranked lower in search results if they lack tags and descriptions. Sitefinity helps you sort and filter pages without descriptions or keywords to help you easily find the pages missing key SEO data. Sitefinity also pre-populates page titles so they're not skipped. Since relocating pages is a constant reality of website management, your CMS should be able to handle this. After a page is moved, Sitefinity will automatically generate a permanent redirect which notifies Google or other search engines that the move has taken place. SEO involves a lot rules, and it's impossible to train your entire team. Sitefinity works to align your website with [SEO best practices](#) automatically.

While many organizations successfully use an open source CMS to launch their site, most quickly realize that their "free" CMS has become quite expensive. When costs for ongoing site work, the lack of flexibility, restricted access, and a host of opportunity costs from poor site functionality are considered, you'd be better served by Sitefinity.

About Sitefinity

Sitefinity is a modern online business platform which adapts to any business requirement and works equally well for online marketers, developers, and IT managers. Sitefinity is used for all kinds of online applications from commercial websites to community portals and intranets, and scales effortlessly no matter the size of your project. Best of all, Sitefinity offers a simple, easy-to-use interface with a virtually flat learning curve that makes it a delight to use.

Sitefinity powers more than 10,000 websites worldwide with a particularly strong presence in financial services, government and education. Global brands such as Kraft Foods, Dannon, Magna, BASF, Toyota, Chevron and Yale School of Management rely on Sitefinity every day.

5 Flexibility & Expansion

While open source options can be expanded and upgraded, this is usually done by an experienced developer. This either consumes valuable IT resources at your organization, or requires outside development help. Further, some enhancements get stalled because the open source community no longer supports your desired feature. For example, your website is dependent on a free "add-on" and you require a minor new feature. However, the open source community no longer maintains the code you need. There's nothing you can do to add the feature unless you pay to have the feature coded from scratch. Customized coding not only is time consuming and expensive, it won't likely be compatible with the overall CMS come upgrade time. If you can't update the site because of customized coding, you're left vulnerable to security risks and other bugs that develop as your site becomes out of date. The visionaries on your product team will be irate at the site's inability to flex as needed. You hunt around for other options, and find something that works, only it doesn't match your site's theme: the feature has a red background, while your site is white and blue. It's such a simple change, but somehow it's become a nightmare to implement.

¹ Center for Information Development and Management (CIDM) 2005

² Justifying Web Content Management: The Business Case and ROI, T. White, 2009

³ Ibid, 6