



# CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS:


**Answering the Build vs. Buy  
Decision to Best Leverage  
Your Corporate Assets**

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*August 2002*



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#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Research: Steven Morgan Friedman, Abhra Haldar, Ellen Pearlman, Tony Rizzo

Design: Harvey Kraft

Editorial Review: Cassandra Mays

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To build or not to build – that is the question. Although the answer may not be of Shakespearean proportions, the issue behind the question has nonetheless become a serious one for many an enterprise looking to establish and maintain a Web site and/or corporate intranet. Basex estimates the market for Content Management products will reach US\$8 billion by 2004. Companies of all sizes are increasingly inundated with “content” and, more importantly, are faced with the task of organizing this content into an intelligible Web interface. The task of managing this massive amount of data is beyond the reach of even the most experienced Web site administrators. However, enterprises are faced with that critical question: is it more beneficial to build a custom content management system that meets the specific needs of the user, or is it better to buy an existing software application that has a wide range of functionality built in?

Once a company has determined it requires a content management system, managers should consider several factors to decide whether to buy or to build. The in-house resources, such as people and time, available should be taken into account, as should the complexity and purpose of the Web site. The particular needs of that enterprise, and the time available to deploy the software are also important considerations.

There is a case to be made for building one’s own content management system. A significant portion of Fortune 500 companies uses CM software that was developed in-house. Much of this software was, however, built before the market for CM software was well established. Today, the market for content management applications is quite extensive. As a result, corporate managers must carefully research the market and understand their own needs in order to make a smart decision.

Managers may also be concerned whether pre-built, all-purpose CM software can meet their own specialized needs. Most vendors build CM software that is designed to deal with common situations and issues that occur in enterprise content management; in fact, it would appear that vendors have anticipated as much as 80 to 90% of potential scenarios that might arise. As a result, managers making a CM purchase decision should not be overly concerned with the idea that their needs are unique. The chances are great that at least one CM vendor has a system that will be suitable.

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Companies may also be concerned about tying themselves to one vendor. These are legitimate but generally unfounded worries. Often the chance of a CM vendor going out of business is less likely than that of a company's lead programmer leaving (and leaving behind incomplete, unclear, or just generally poor documentation), leaving the homegrown system near useless.

Buying a content management solution, on the other hand, presents many advantages. Building a system almost always takes longer and is more expensive than planned; programmers are famous for underestimating design costs and time. Furthermore, staffing programmers for such an ambitious project is often more expensive than buying a CM package. The time needed to organize this sort of large-scale project, combined with the inevitable delays, is also often much greater than the time needed to implement a purchased CM solution.

Furthermore, creating, upgrading, and maintaining CM software is the core competency of CM vendors, and certainly not that of MIS managers. CM vendors are thus able to better and more cost-efficiently improve their software, as need be, than the end-user themselves can. Vendors also add features requested by other users, which may have wide applicability.

Managers must carefully gauge their company's needs and resources before attempting to make a build v. buy decision. Companies often overestimate their needs, and purchase products whose use is akin to trying to swat a mosquito with a Sherman tank. If a solution does present all needed functionality but is too expensive, the enterprise should seriously consider building a base framework for its CM system and then purchasing additional functionality from CM vendors as it sees fit. If adding additional functionality, either in the short term or long, is imperative, buyers should consider open source CM products, or CM products that include access to the source code when purchased.

There are certain scenarios in which it is clearly better to buy a CM solution. When deployment time is limited or when needs are standard, buying presents immediate and obvious advantages. Also, given the depth and breadth of today's content management market, companies on a limited budget can find versatile low- to mid-tier CM products that will meet their practically all of needs. As well-intentioned as projects to build CM applications may be, the "buy" choice is almost always more cost effective, quicker, and better technologically, for present and future uses, than the alternative.

## Market Need

There is a strong demand for content management systems, as evidenced by the robust market. The demand comes from three sectors: large corporate Web sites, SME Web sites, and corporate intranets. Basex estimates the market for CM products, in aggregate, will be US\$8 billion by 2004. Professional and corporate Web sites are now significant endeavors, whose size and complexity have grown along with that of the organization it represents. Since the very purpose of CM software is to allow non-technical staff to manage the content on what would normally be a highly technical Web site, the need for these tools is self-evident. The best editors and writers simply do not make the best programmers.

Today, fairly sophisticated content management systems are within reach of the budgets of many small- and medium-sized enterprises, commonly referred to as the SME market.

## Market Space

The content management software market is divided into three tiers. The first is comprised of the high-end packages, software that can handle almost any content management task – but this versatility comes at a price. Interwoven's TeamSite, for example, is an excellent example of the functionality, reliability, and scalability of CM software—but its daunting US\$250,000 price tag makes it an impractical choice for a SME buyer. The second tier of CM software is the middle-market and the focus of this report. These are the CM players who offer nearly all the functionality of the high-end products but at a fraction of the cost.

The third tier, which comprises a significant portion of the CM market, is made up of the smaller players. Simple content management software can be designed fairly easily. Many people have tried to design such software themselves, with varying levels of success. Only a few of these packages are scalable or useful enough for future expansion and development, so they are not featured prominently in this paper.

Users of the product can choose to publish content to any designated server, regardless of hosting or type of server. Employees can log on to their server and begin inputting changes as dictated by the user permissions and task workflow set forth by an enterprise. Scheduled update and publication options are also available in the software.

Workflow capabilities are worthy of note. Users can view the entire life of a task and add comments at any point. In collaborative efforts within (or even between) corporations, Atomz can automatically send e-mail notification to the necessary parties when tasks are approved, modified, or rejected. In addition, the graphical workflow menu allows users to reassign tasks or assign rights to modify a task to groups of workers.

Atomz Publish is a mid-range product in the CM market, so advanced development features (i.e., development IDEs and products to add functionality) that can be found in high-end software are not offered. However, it is built on open-source technology, so opportunities to enhance and customize the product do exist. A modest knowledge of HTML and/or XML can be used to configure the system, and implementation options are flexible.

End users appreciated the stability of the Atomz solution as well as the hassle-free installation process. The emphasis on templates simplified design issues, although some asserted that users would have an easier time making changes to templates using HTML instead of Atomz wizards and interfaces.

Atomz Publish can be used with Atomz Search, creating a formidable CM unit. Atomz' standalone CM offering, replete with useful features and options, merits some serious attention for any enterprise looking for effective content management.

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