



Milestone

Choosing the perfect CMS

4 Pillars of picking the perfect Content Management System

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Introduction

Your website and mobile presence are the most powerful channels for driving direct leads and traffic to your business. Selecting the right content management system (CMS) for your website is one of the cornerstones for any business seeking to establish a world-class digital marketing presence. The platform upon which you build your website and mobile presence has a huge impact on your customers' user experience and on your presence in search engine results - and hence your digital return on investment. In this article, we outline some of the key considerations that impact your choice of CMS.

WHAT ARE THE 4 PILLARS?

Is your CMS delivering a world-class customer experience?

Your CMS should be flexible enough to let you create a world-class user experience, without sacrificing great design. A powerful experience is built upon speed, but requires accessibility for greater access and less risk for ADA compliance issues. Enhancing your location with event calendars creates a richer, more interactive brand, while integrated reviews and social media tags create engagement and customer loyalty. Finally, requests for information forms, coupons, and time-sensitive offers all make great calls to action that drive conversion. Don't compromise the quality of creative design. It's critical in establishing an emotional connection with the consumer. Personalization is key to connecting with your guests and your CMS should allow you to personalize your messaging.

50% of Web traffic is mobile - is your CMS optimized for mobile experience?

To provide the best mobile experience you need a CMS that starts with mobile at its core. A mobile first design is imperative, but it must be driven by an adaptive responsive engine that serves up the right content for the right device – every time. Finally, it must provide the latest in mobile technology – AMP web sites – that provide a rich experience in blazingly fast download times and is going to be a key driver for mobile sites going forward.

Are your location pages optimized for Voice Search and SEO?

Voice search and intelligent assistants like Siri and Google Now are not only the future of search, but the present. Can your CMS provide the structured markup you need to be the answer? Is your CMS powered by metatags, image, and social tags to provide the best of all search worlds?

Will my team be able to manage and enhance the site without writing code?

Even the best CMS systems must be ultimately built for the person using them. That means content management and collaboration features must be easy to use and approachable. Security must be outstanding and the whole system must make it easy to test content through A/B testing and conversion optimization.

Free your design, convert your customers

The average consumer spends less than 1 second before staying on your site, or leaving it. “First impressions” have never been as important as they are in the digital realm. Your CMS should give your designers the freedom they need to use and deploy the latest trends in digital design, and use creative graphical elements and imagery to tell your business story, all while reinforcing the usability and ease of use that your conversion testing has highlighted as necessary.

Speed means conversions and revenue

Think speed – always. The speed of your location pages should be top of mind. Your CMS should be architected to be nimble, light-weight but powerful – so it doesn’t get in the way. A slow CMS means slow loading pages – and that means customers abandon your site. Solutions that are laden with Javascript and that rely on a multitude of plug-ins mean one thing – slow download times – and that ultimately means lost revenue. Always ask yourself this question, what kind of page speed does this CMS deliver on desktop? On mobile sites? How often do users of this CMS reach or exceed Google’s recommendations?

Accessibility means more than just avoiding ADA compliance issues

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 mandates that electronic and information technology must be accessible to people with disabilities. Catering to those with disabilities is not just a mandate of the law, it’s the right thing to do and it makes good business sense. Beyond making business sense, conforming to the ADA guidelines established by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), is also a smart legal move. That’s because with a conforming web site you can protect yourself from the types of legal challenges that businesses in New York, California and Pennsylvania have already dealt with in the past few years.

Enhance the local experience – dynamic content through local events

Connecting with your consumers at the local and community level establishes a one-to-one relationship that only a local business owner can establish. Your consumers don't live in a static world that is powered only by what you offer – they want to interact with the world around them. Give them the freedom to do so by ensuring your CMS can seamlessly feed locally relevant events through an event calendar. Enhance the experience with the ability to add blog entries, and online surveys. Dynamic content on your website keeps the site fresh and engaging and keeps bringing consumers and search engines back.

Integrated reviews

92% of consumers read local online reviews before buying a product or engaging with a business. Reviews are a critical part of driving customer engagement. Reviews are important to the customer purchase life-cycle, and integrated reviews on your pages create higher levels of interaction, higher confidence in your brand, and lead to higher conversion. Your CMS should aggregate reviews from 3rd party sources and also allow consumers to leave reviews on the store page directly. For best results, however, be sure that the CMS you select offers consumers the ability to leave reviews on your website in a way that can be indexed by search engines.

Engage the customer - social media

Integration of social media on the location pages offers a huge opportunity to engage customers through the website. CMS should allow for easy integration of blogs and social channels so that your location pages provide an omni-channel user experience. Social media tags - Facebook Open Graph tag, Twitter Cards, Pinterest Pins - enable your users to share content on the social channels from your web site with the best imagery and branding – all controlled by you.

Conversion calls to action – drive requests and customer inquiries

The CMS should offer plug-ins and modules that give you the power and flexibility to quickly create request for information forms, online coupons, and time-sensitive offers. These calls to action drive a higher conversion on the website and provide the leads you need to drive direct revenue to your business.

Conversion Rate Optimization and A/B testing

Even the best of web sites can always use improvements. But what's the right change? How do you improve conversions? Your CMS system should make it simple to perform conversion rate optimization testing – also known as A/B testing to determine best design and features on your store pages.

IS YOUR CMS OPTIMIZED FOR MOBILE?

Personalization

Personalization of the message on your website is key to establishing a deeper connection with your customer. Your CMS should be able to personalize the messaging by the user's geography or based on their interest as determined by the ads or the keywords that attracted them to your location pages.

Mobile first designs

Your CMS should be centered around a "mobile first" design philosophy that employs highly customized content, optimized for a rich mobile experience. The focus is on speed, user experience, and personalization. "Less is more" content gives users what they need and empowers consumers to act faster and share easier by enabling "micro moments," the ability for consumers to "know," "do," "go," and "buy" – all directly from their mobile devices, all powered by your web site.

Responsive website

To provide the highest consumer satisfaction, Google recommends presenting information to mobile users through a uniquely mobile experience – not a desktop experience that's been reformatted. That's why your CMS should provide responsive website – a site that fits the desktop, tablet, and mobile screen seamlessly. There are multiple formats of responsive sites – client side responsive or server side (adaptive) responsive. Either format works, although from search and user experience, adaptive responsive site is quicker to load and performs better on search engines. Regardless, make sure that your website is responsive.

Are your pages AMPed?

The future of mobile content is AMP – Accelerated Mobile Pages. AMP is a Google initiative that aims to deliver the best possible mobile user experience by eliminating unnecessary content and through a highly-optimized site. AMP pages are very likely to be the preferred method of serving results for Google to mobile users searching for content.

Structured data markup

Structured data is critical to the evolution of search. A visit to www.schema.org will give you a quick glimpse into the heart of how modern search engines operate. Structured data and schema markup on the website are key to visibility on search engines and in predictive assistance platforms like Apple iOS 10 and Siri, Amazon Echo, Microsoft Cortana, and Google Assistant. Schema information is used to display information in Google Knowledge Graph, Bing, iOS10, Apple Maps, and most platforms. Location, business type, products, services, nearby attractions – all have topic "tags."

ARE YOUR LOCATION PAGES OPTIMIZED FOR VOICE SEARCH AND SEO?

**CAN I MANAGE
MY SITE WITH
EASE?**

Voice Search and Artificial Intelligence

Search has evolved. Artificial Intelligence is powering a brave new world driven by information assistants and “bots.” Systems like Google Assistant, Siri and Amazon Echo provide information to the consumer without asking, while conversational search that aims to provide direct answers (instead of links) will dominate as search continues to evolve. Consumers today are much more likely to simply “ask” their smart phone “Where can I buy new tires for my car closest to my current location?” It turns out that in 2016 more than 50% of searches took the form of a question – and 20% were made using voice input! That’s BILLIONS of questions and answers. Google, Apple, Amazon and the rest of the purveyors of all things consumer have spent billions creating intelligent systems that are designed to provide the fastest, most accurate answer to questions like these and thousands of others. To perform all this magic, however, the search engines need some help, and that help comes in the form of structured data and well researched content on your store website.

Metatags, Image Tags, and Social Tags

Your CMS should make it easy to add tags including Title Tags, H1s, H2s and so on, but it should also make it simple to add Image Alt tags and social tags such as Facebook OpenGraph tags, etc. Tagging your website pages and content and images will lead to better search engine visibility and greater reach for your content. But make sure your CMS is flexible enough to allow the editing and adding of tags on an ongoing basis.

Is your CMS provider staying current?

Technology changes – FAST – your CMS needs to have the backing of a company that can stay ahead. While open source CMS systems may seem affordable, they place the burden of keeping up with technology on you. Structured data, Apple’s iOS 10 release, Mobilegeddon (Google’s algorithm update), AMP sites, ADA compliance issues – these are just a handful of examples of technology innovations and needs that have arisen in the last 12-18 months. How quickly can you bring your website in compliance? A CMS that is not technologically up to date will lead you to lose market share.

Content management and collaboration

Any CMS should have an easy to use WYSIWYG editor and should allow your team to manage all content, images, photo galleries, and forms through the CMS. It should allow easy addition of landing pages for paid search and specials. For larger teams, moderation workflow and multiple user permission levels for security are key. For brand websites, it’s important to have a multi-tenant architecture so that you can manage all websites from a single interface. You should be able to enable features globally across multiple sites, update brand compliance elements globally, and perform template-level changes globally - all features that are available with Milestone CMS.

Security and reliability

Web sites are prone to hacking and challenges from unauthorized third parties. Ensure that your website environment and infrastructure is set up with a world-class configuration and security environment. In addition to security, reliability and up-time of the system are also critical. Ensure that there is a high quality firewall, intrusion detection systems, load balancing, CDN (for sites with high international traffic), and adequate back-up systems. Low-cost hosting environments may seem like great bargains, but without these features the bargain will be quickly lost the first time your site is hacked or compromised.

Support and customer service

The best software is of no use without the right partner to back it up. Milestone clients consistently see some of the best results in the industry. That's why we have a 97% customer satisfaction rating and have won more than 300 awards. Better still, Milestone customers have experienced 20% to 30% lifts in revenue by switching to Milestone, and our clients love us for our ability to drive revenue.

Conclusion

How do you find the right Content Management System for your business? What's important? These are just some of the questions we have tried to address in this document. Milestone was created to help digital marketers create and deliver exceptional user experiences. Our Digital Presence Cloud lets you create compelling content and deliver it on any device, any location. With Milestone, you can create content, engage customers across social channels, on your web site and through advanced digital marketing strategies, and analyze your efforts to help you maximize revenue and create exceptional experiences for your clients.

To learn more, visit us at www.milestoneinternet.com or call us at 1-866-615-2516.