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The Seven C's Of Web Content Management

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The web content management (WCM) market is currently experiencing a significant evolution as requirements for those platforms have grown beyond just managing web content. Instead, organizations need WCM to help support rich, contextual, engaging, cross-channel experiences. The growth of new content types, the emergence of new channels, and the increased expectations of customers all drive this significant change in WCM. Now, content and collaboration (C&C) professionals need to remember that the “C” in WCM no longer stands for just content. Instead, they must keep in mind the additional C’s as well: context, channel, consistency, community, consumer behavior, and creation.

WEB CONTENT MANAGEMENT: THE GREAT MISNOMER

First-generation web content management (WCM) products addressed the need to capture, manage, and store content types used throughout the organization. But WCM is no longer about just supporting IT professionals in moving content from point A to point B. WCM, despite its name, now needs to support more than just managing content. It also must enable marketing and eBusiness professionals to engage customers and prospects in order to achieve business goals, such as increased conversion rates and better customer solutions. Second-generation WCM solutions — while continuing to offer the basics — have added functionality or are integrated with systems that support content targeting, mobile distribution, social interaction, and integrated web analytics and optimization.¹ But some organizations still take WCM’s name literally and focus only on WCM as a silo for managing content when devising strategies.

CONTENT IS STILL KING, BUT MUST SHARE THE CROWN

What has caused this evolution from a strict focus on content publishing? Pervasive web access, increased customer expectations, and the emergence of new channels have changed the WCM game.² Specifically, changes in the WCM market have been driven by:

- **Ever-improving Internet accessibility.** Increased bandwidth and the arrival of 3G along with the handsets that can take advantage of them have only just begun to illustrate what is possible with the mobile Internet. Forrester estimated that by late 2010, 57% of active phones in the US were 3G-capable and able to access the mobile Web. In addition, Forrester projects that broadband Internet access, which penetrated 68% of households in 2009, will grow to 80% by 2015.³
- **The emergence of new channels.** Consumers no longer interact with companies through siloed channels. Instead, they expect to visit a company’s traditional website one day, use the email

channel the next, and use a mobile application on the third. At the same time, all channels must provide context as to how the consumer previously interacted with the company, regardless of channel, which can be difficult given that many eBusiness and channel strategy professionals have responsibility for websites only.⁴ The rapid proliferation of handheld phones and tablet computers, which provide additional avenues for interaction, has only complicated this issue.

- **A move from product-centric to consumer-centric marketing.** Consumers are more sophisticated and savvy than ever. They use more channels and accomplish more online than just getting information, entertainment, or goods. They use online channels to browse, help, share, and create their own content as they go about their daily lives, with voting, reviewing, blogging, and using social networks.⁵ Companies that don't serve these customers effectively —sticking to channel-specific, one-size-fits-all strategies instead— put the relevance of their business at risk.

With these changes, online visitors have come to expect experiences that are usable, relevant, engaging, and personal.⁶ Content remains the critical foundation of these experiences, but merely publishing that content just isn't enough.

FOCUS STRATEGIES ON THE SEVEN C'S OF WCM

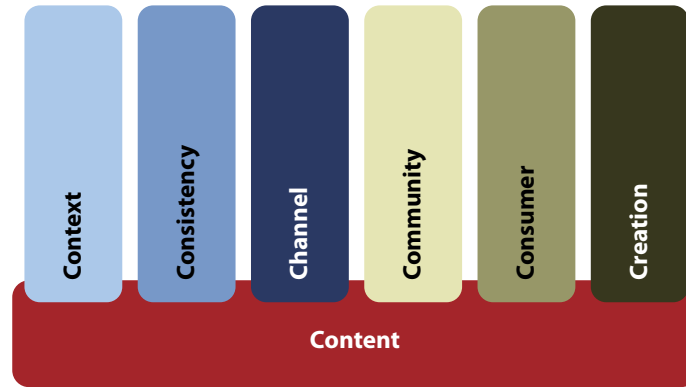
The “C” in WCM no longer stands for just content, and C&C pros must think beyond just content publishing when formulating WCM strategies. Instead, they must consider how well their strategies and technologies take into account not only content, but context, consistency, community, channel, consumer behavior, and creation as well (see Figure 1).

- **Content.** Content remains the foundation of any WCM initiative and the basics will always position an organization for better engagement. Workflows mitigate risk; taxonomies improve search and targeting efforts; retention policies help keep content up-to-date; and regular archiving enables eDiscovery efforts. But site visitors expect more than just text. C&C pros must also pay close attention to how their WCMs can manage emerging types of content, like audio, video, and rich internet applications (RIAs) such as Flash and Silverlight.⁷
- **Context.** One-size-fits all may suffice for content publishing, but does not meet the needs for engaging experiences on publicly-facing websites. While WCM vendors have supported some form of content targeting for years, customers have only recently begun to reach the organizational and operational maturity to support it.⁸ The targeting tools that vendors offer have matured as well. WCM vendors offer support for implicit and explicit rules-based targeting, recommendations engines, search-based applications, and increasingly, geolocation.⁹
- **Channel.** Since customers and prospects have cross-channel company interactions, C&C pros need to focus on managing content agnostically for not only the channels they deliver to today (such as web, mobile, and email) but for the channels that may emerge tomorrow. For example,

NPR Digital has accomplished this with this an XML interface over an SOA infrastructure that enables relatively easy content repurposing to multiple channels. WCM vendors have particular focus on the mobile channel these days, with functionality including device detection, preview, geotargeting, and in-context editing. But firms will increasingly look to repurpose WCM-based content to power other channels such as digital readers and Internet TVs (see Figure 2).

- **Consistency.** Today's consumers expect a familiar and recognizable experience on any channel. "The best brands are ruthlessly consistent," one automobile manufacturer CEO told Forrester, and that consistency must be cross-channel. WCM enables this by supporting the ability to store both content and presentation elements locally but repurpose them across multiple sites (and channels) while allowing for the flexibility to localize those elements at the country or brand level. Globalization and localization functionality has proven to be a differentiator among WCM vendors.¹⁰
- **Community.** Social functionality has led to the democratization of the Web, as site visitors are no longer content to simply consume content. Members of Generation Y, in particular, like to share everything including likes and dislikes, preferences, reviews, and recommendations.¹¹ Social communities serve as a place where consumers can create content and firms can mine this information and profit.¹² WCM vendors offer social capabilities like blogs, wikis, threaded discussions, and content distribution to communities such as Facebook. Social analytics and the use of social networking user profile information to target content are on the horizon as well. However, most WCM products don't currently support the creation of social applications that include profiles and collaboration; this requires third-party products from vendors such as Jive.
- **Consumer behavior.** Web analytics and optimization applications play increasing roles as organizations want to understand how site visitors consume content and want to test out content variations before actually launching them to a broad audience.¹³ WCM vendors — after a period of supplying native analytics — now offer varying levels of integrations with third-party analytics vendors such as Omniture and Webtrends. This functionality ranges from simply supporting tag placement in templates to importing analytics data into the content management environment so that content consumption information is never more than a click away. In contrast, some WCM vendors do offer native A/B and multivariate functionality rather than integrations, since third-party optimization packages aren't as widely installed as analytics.
- **Creation.** In some ways, creation is the most important of the seven C's. Customer engagement strategies can sound great on paper but can fail if WCM fails to empower the right stakeholders, such as marketing professionals. WCM has begun to do this with better content authoring tools — such as editing content in the context of its delivery presentation — and it has also begun to enrich tools that go beyond just content publishing, such as campaign management and customer segmentation. But needs vary from company to company, and C&C pros must strategically configure and customize these tools to meet the needs of their own organizations.¹⁴

Figure 1 The Seven C's Of Web Content Management



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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

Figure 2 A Growing Number Of Devices Connect To The Web

2-1 From mainstream ...



2-2 ... to leading edge



Source: Amazon.com, chumby industries, and Ambient Devices websites

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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

LOOK BEYOND YOUR WCM PRODUCT AS WELL

Many vendors have created momentum around their online engagement initiatives through strategic acquisitions and repackaging of existing products. In particular, Adobe, Autonomy, and IBM have all embraced packaging multiple components of their portfolios — such as content management, web analytics, desktop creation tools, search, and testing and optimization — in order to create an online engagement platform. However, none of these vendors have all of the requirements outlined in the seven C's, nor are all of their offerings particularly well-integrated at this time. And even if a group of vendors offered an integrated suite, most enterprises don't have the budget or resources to do a complete rip and replace of their current engagement technologies.

Instead, C&C pros need to keep an eye on vendors that support an integration approach. For example, a firm could integrate WCM with a customer relationship management (CRM) system not only to enable better content targeting utilizing customer data stored in the CRM, but also to create a powerful sales enablement tool by giving salespeople a view (from the CRM application) into how customers and prospects consume content. Or WCM could integrate with a knowledge management (KM) system to bring content previously available only through call centers into the online channels. Vendors that understand the integration approach showcase strategic road maps that outline an engagement architecture that goes beyond WCM, as well as rich (and well-documented) APIs, and deals with strategic partners that result in prepackaged integrations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

EXPAND YOUR WCM STRATEGY BEYOND JUST MANAGING CONTENT

To support rich, consistent, engaging, cross-channel experiences, C&C pros must stop thinking about just managing content and start thinking about the technologies that enable the seven C's. In particular C&C pros should:

- **Align and organize your core stakeholders.** Though most companies still don't have centralized digital media operations, periodic meetings can help align stakeholders from IT, marketing, and eBusiness. The results? Increased shared technology, brand consistency, and operational efficiencies. One consumer products manufacturer that Forrester spoke with began their digital media overhaul with simple monthly meetings between different groups, which eventually resulted in a single web stack supported by a shared services group that could launch a new brand website in five days.
- **Assess your maturity against the seven C's and prioritize.** Don't try to do everything at once. Instead, work with counterparts in marketing and eBusiness to understand where they prioritize content targeting, mobile, social, and multisite initiatives. And ask them if the current tool sets serve their needs; if not, creation must be a top priority.

- **Source your technology and connect the dots strategically.** Beware of vendors who promise a full-suite, single-vendor approach — that approach simply isn't realistic for most enterprises (or vendors, currently). Instead, focus on vendors that understand they won't be your only source for online engagement technologies and instead can enable you to integrate different systems together. Press them for real-life use cases and references when they tell you about partnerships, so you can verify that those partnerships are more than just press releases.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ To support the rich, dynamic experiences that customers have grown to expect on the Web, content and collaboration professionals need to strategically knit together a mix of on-premises and cloud offerings from an ecosystem of providers. See the February 8, 2010, "[The Online Customer Engagement Software Ecosystem](#)" report.
- ² Forrester believes that four attributes will characterize the next phase of development of the Web. Online experiences will be: customized by the end user, aggregated at the point of use, relevant to the moment, and social as a rule, not an exception. See the January 28, 2010, "[The Future Of Online Customer Experience](#)" report.
- ³ Forrester provided a generational overview of US consumers' demographics, behaviors, and technology attitudes. See the September 21, 2010, "[The State Of Consumers And Technology: Benchmark 2010, US](#)" report.
- ⁴ The only channel eBusiness and channel strategy professionals clearly control are their organization's websites: 89% of survey respondents are responsible for them. Reflecting fragmented organizational structures and illustrating the challenge eBusiness professionals face in creating good multichannel experiences, few eBusiness professionals say they're largely responsible for either their firm's customer service (30%) or its call centers (29%). See the February 5, 2010, "[Using Digital Channels To Create Breakthrough Multichannel Relationships](#)" report.
- ⁵ Social technologies have arrived, and as social technologies approach universal participation, marketers need to change their attitudes. The question "Should I start?" is no longer relevant; the new question is, "What are my customers open to, and what are my competitors doing?" See the January 15, 2010, "[Introducing The New Social Technographics®](#)" report.
- ⁶ Forrester explores three tactics for creating desirable online experiences: 1) providing engaging content and functionality, 2) focusing on aesthetics, and 3) incorporating elements of game design. See the August 8, 2007, "[Desirable Online Experiences: Taking Web Sites Beyond Useful And Usable](#)" report.
- ⁷ Broadband access has created a new audience for rich media content online. In turn, user demand for rich media content, such as music, games, and video, has helped drive broadband adoption. For an in-depth look at how this trend has affected the media industry, see the May 1, 2009, "[How Digital Consumption Is Reinventing The Media Industry](#)" report.

- ⁸ In interviews with retailers, Forrester found that whenever a company created different key pages (e.g., variable home pages) for different segments of customers, it generally requires at least an additional full-time employee to manage the creative, monitoring/analytics, development, and quality assurance processes. See the November 18, 2010, "[What You Need To Know About Third-Party Recommendation Engines](#)" report.
- ⁹ Forrester's definition of content targeting encompasses a wide variety of methods, from the creation of microsites for specific visitor interests, to algorithm-driven recommendations and the "customization" of web pages by individual visitors. See the November 7, 2008, "[To Succeed With Web Content Personalization, Start Failing Now](#)" report.
- ¹⁰ For an in depth look at the top vendors and their capabilities in the WCM market, see the June 1, 2009 "[The Forrester Wave™: Web Content Management For External Sites, Q2 2009](#)" report.
- ¹¹ In the North American Technographics Empowerment Online Survey, Q4 2009 (US), 37% of US online adults were classified as critics, those who posted ratings and reviews, were frequent blog commentators and contributors to online forums, and contributed to articles in wikis.
- ¹² Evidence indicates that social technologies provide an attractive ROI in a short period of time while delivering better customer experiences. See the June 30, 2009, "[The ROI Of Online Customer Service Communities](#)" report.
- ¹³ Online testing is an effective site optimization technique, but few organizations have successfully scaled their testing initiatives to affect customer experience or business performance. See the November 29, 2010, "[Defining A Scalable Site Optimization Process](#)" report.
- ¹⁴ Critical issues that surface repeatedly from failed WCM projects include a lack of business ownership, IT-driven — rather than user-driven — design, unnecessarily complex specifications, and poorly designed workflow. See the February 23, 2007, "[Five Pitfalls To Avoid In Web Content Management Implementations](#)" report.