

The Commercial Web: The Marriage of Marketing and IT

By Lisa Welchman

The rise of the commercial Web has forced a new kind of partnership between business Marketing and IT organizations. In this article, we discuss how Web content management systems can improve the frequently volatile dynamics of this new union.

WHAT YOU HEAR NOW:

Marketing says: “IT just doesn’t get it. Don’t they know that the purpose of the Web site is to market and sell products? If I need to change the copy on a Web page at the 11th hour, then the Web team should be at the ready.”

IT says: “Marketing person, you don’t know anything about technology, let alone about managing a Web site. There are such things as QA and code freeze. You better *plan* for all those changes you want made. Otherwise, the whole Web site is going to crash.”

No matter who you are, if you’ve worked anywhere around a Web team, you’ve heard these two viewpoints. We’re not diplomats here at webcms.org but we have to say, in this instance, that both viewpoints are correct. Web content management systems can go a long way in bridging this gap in points of view.

Web Content Management Systems Can Help:

1. Enforce Workflow – The Web CMS is not going to create a standardized workflow for you. You still need to perform the tasks of documenting and communicating your Web site workflow. But it’s a lot easier to enforce a workflow process if you have tools and systems in place to support it.

For instance, if every new page that goes on to the site has to be reviewed by the Director of Marketing, you can create a workflow that forces each page through this review process before it is finalized and deployed. Even Web content management systems that do not have sophisticated workflow systems usually have some facility for advancing a piece of content in a workflow.

2. Control Quality of Content – If the only way to get content on to the Web server is via the content management system, then automated or manual workflow controls can be put into place to make sure that non-compliant Web content does not get on to the site. This helps both Marketing and IT.

For instance, Marketing could ensure the consistency of the graphical company brand and messaging while IT can ensure that the sizes of the graphic files on the server are within the standards for the site.

3. Take the Guesswork out of Workload – Do you really understand who is doing what work in the Web group? If Anne, a Web Marketing person, comes to Jayne, an IT Web editor, with a quick Web page change and she says that she’s got too much work on her plate, how do you know if anyone else in the group can help? If you have a small group and they all sit in the same general vicinity, you can just ask around. But what if half the Web team is in Washington, D.C, and the other half is in Austin, TX?

Some Web content management systems help monitor workflow. You could pull up a report that would let you know who has what on their to-do list so that Jayne could maybe say: "I can't do it for you but it looks like Paul can." Imagine that.

These are just a few of the ways that a Web content management system can help facilitate a better working relationship among Marketing and IT.

Some Final Food for Thought for when You've about Had It with the Other Guys:

For IT Folks about Marketing:

Those annoying Marketing and Sales folks' job functions have a direct impact on your company's bottom line. Yes, the Web site may be instrumental in selling products and services, but it is the Marketing team that has a clear idea about what the sales initiatives are for your business. The only reason they ask IT Web teams to do what they do is to meet those business objectives. And that's important to everyone's paycheck. You need to support them as much as possible.

For Marketing about IT:

We know that you think that the Web has an instant turnaround time. You've read about it in all the marketing magazines. You feel empowered being able to react quickly to market trends. **BUT REMEMBER--** your Web site is a software application and the development of software applications have to follow certain rules-- or else you run the risk of damaging the site and creating a bad user experience for the very people you're trying to hurry up and impress.

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