

dynamic content management



DIESEL DESIGN

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a creative communications agency

branded identity \ web design & development \ print collateral



benefits of dynamic content management (DCM)

- > decentralized editing of content
- > employees focus on core competencies
- > promote design consistency throughout site
- > efficient production, no HTML required
- > separation of content and layout
- > quality assurance through release control
eliminates embarrassing errors
- > link consistency
- > access control

Keep It Fresh With Dynamic Content Management (DCM)

A great Web site is like a great bakery where the bread is always fresh and warm. Unfortunately, most companies and organizations today do not have the time or manpower to keep their Web sites stocked with piping hot information; the kind of information that keeps customers and prospects interested and creates the urge to return over and over again. Too many Web sites are totally dependent on a Web Master or other IT guru to maintain and update Web content. Inevitably, Web information updates begin to sink lower and lower on the Web Master's to do list. Eventually, Web information becomes stale and moldy, which can spell doom for e-business.

What is Dynamic Content Management (DCM)?

The need to keep Web content hot and fresh has grown in importance in proportion to the overall growth of Web use in general. However, a shortage of skilled technical staff coupled with the need for continuous Web updates has given rise to a growing market for content management services and tools. Whether you use a software tool and/or consulting services to streamline the flow of new content into your Web site, the goals of content management systems remain the same:

- > Enable non-technical staff to update content more easily;
- > Distribute responsibility for content management to appropriate departments or groups;
- > Reduce the overall cost of Web site management;
- > Strengthen critical relationships between a company and its many stakeholders, including customers, employees, shareholders and vendors; and
- > Increase revenue from the sale of product, parts and/or services.

Dynamic content management is a way to link the accessible elements of your Web site to flexible sources of new and changing information.

This information could be contained in corporate databases built on platforms such as Oracle, SQL Server, Informix, Sybase and others. A link is created using the DCM system between the user-accessible front end and the backend database. As information changes in the database — products, parts, inventory, prices, etc. — the Web site can be automatically updated using the new information.

Canned or Fresh?

While the goals of content management may remain the same whether you are using a software tool, consulting services, or a combination, the experience and ultimate outcome may be very different. For modest Web sites, a low-end software package that sells for a few hundred dollars may suffice. However, for most mission critical e-commerce sites, something more robust is usually required. A software system designed to handle large-scale content management needs can cost in the range of \$250,000 to \$350,000. Training and other consulting fees associated with these packages can easily push implementation costs over the \$400,000 mark.

Not only can these pre-packaged content management systems be very costly, in many cases a company ends up using only a fraction of the features they pay for. For instance, a large corporate site may implement a content management package that includes a banner advertising server that is never used. Perhaps the biggest drawback to canned content management systems is that they force your e-business to adapt your content to match the package's predetermined structure. In addition, many high-end content management systems still require the services of a skilled programmer or IT professional to help prepare content for storage and delivery, manage database linkages and so on.

Baked Fresh

When it comes to creating the right content management system to meet the needs of your e-business, freshness counts. If your e-commerce site, intranet, or extranet site has been successful, there's probably a very good reason for it. Why alter the formula that has led to success?

The right DCM system should enhance your site's unique qualities rather than try to mold those qualities to fit a prestructured content management system.

At a fraction of the cost of many high-end prepackaged content management systems, most companies can hire a Web consulting firm to create and implement a tailored DCM system. At Diesel Design dynamic content management systems have rapidly become the centerpiece of most of our consulting engagements. Often we design a DCM system as part of larger redesign project that is typically aimed at increasing or improving corporate identity, Web site usability and database connectivity.

While we use many of the standard tools available to today's Web developers, including various languages such as Java, XML, DHTML, Visual Basic and ActiveServer Pages, our end product is designed for ease-of-use by the non-technical user. A universal requirement today is that all DCM administrative tools we create be accessible through a common web browser. To achieve this goal, we carefully analyze and define our client's needs and then provide a prototype DCM system that can be tested and refined.

Agile e-commerce companies often run lean with employees performing two or more jobs. Most of these firms cannot devote key IT staffers to content updates. Most of our clients believe that the people who actually create content or know the content should be responsible for keeping it fresh. We agree. To illustrate the importance of DCM to successful e-business sites, we offer the following example.

Diesel's DCM Powers Kestrel Solutions

Kestrel Solutions, a start-up in optical networking, turned to Diesel Design to create an eye-catching site that streamlines management of online content. After carefully defining the sources of content, the level of expertise of content providers and the overall workflow within Kestrel Solutions, Diesel was able to separate the delivery of Web content from page design.

The DCM system enables non-technical employees to edit and add their own material to the Kestrel Solutions site, removing much of the burden from the company's technical staff. Capabilities added to the Kestrel Solutions site using Diesel's DCM system reduced administrative overhead and increased visitor interactivity. Those capabilities included:

> Job Listings

The DCM system was used to enable human resource administrators to post new jobs, change existing listings and better manage job candidate information. In today's tight job market, the ability to quickly post new openings and efficiently process new applications is essential to a fast-growing company. The new DCM system allows human resource staff to view resumes, post comments, send e-mails to applicants, search a resume database and print summaries.

> Press Releases

Kestrel Solution's new DCM system also helps the public relations department manage the flow of information to the media, the investor community and the public. The DCM system enables the company's public relations and marketing professionals to pre-designate release dates for each news release. For instance, if the company plans a new product release to occur during an important trade show, the marketing communications manager can set a "live" date to coincide with the company's appearance at the show. The DCM system will make the release available on the company's Web site at the appointed time, without human intervention.

> **Article Links**

As a fast-track technology firm maintaining high visibility is essential to building credibility. A DCM component was used to automatically post links to new articles on the company Web site as they were logged by the PR staff.

> **Information Requests**

To manage the steady stream of information requests from the press, investors, job applicants and many others, an automated logging system was created that enabled requests to be routed to the appropriate department within the company.

DCM Keeps 'em Coming Back

E-business success depends heavily on repeat visitors seeking meaningful, personalized information. Successful e-businesses need Web sites that tightly link them to customers, employees, vendors and other important audiences.

A customized DCM system can breathe life into any Web site by delivering up-to-the-minute information that tells the site visitor you value their business. Today's lean e-businesses can gain meaningful benefits by working with a DCM specialist to design a system that distributes responsibility for content management, reduces administrative overhead and provides a personalized experience for each site visitor.

For more information about integrating Diesel Design's DCM into your existing or future Web site, call Jeffrey Harkness at 415.621.4481, ext. 14 or write jeffrey@dieseldesign.com.