

What is a **Content Management System?**

TIPS &
TRICKS

A Content Management System (CMS) is a web environment that allows a number of people, typically non-technical, to collaborate and manage the content on their website with little or no web coding skills.

TYPES OF CMS

CMS' come in various forms:

- Enterprise level systems for very large websites with vast amounts of pages and content;
- Document management systems for maintaining large document environments such as photo banks or document repositories;
- Mobile content management systems for managing content supplied to mobile devices such as smart phones; and
- Web content management systems that are web-based applications used for managing a site's content.

Web content management systems are the most common systems that the average client uses. They allow them to:

- Edit their site content on the fly with minimal training and without the need to know HTML coding
- Delegate content management and supervision to multiple administrators

HOW TO CHOOSE A CMS

Developers choose software solutions based on the client's needs and technical savvy. All content management systems allow users, referred to as administrators, to manipulate their site's content within a browser that looks similar to an MS Word environment. However, some administrative environments are more complex than others. Developers evaluate their client's comfort level with technology and choose a CMS that is both suited to their business needs and the administrator's technical abilities.

OPEN SOURCE VS. PROPRIETARY

Professional web developers use a variety of software solutions to build content management systems for clients. These come in two forms—off-the-shelf, proprietary systems and open source systems. Open source solutions are created by developers using openly available software modules that are created by the development community. These are typically available for free but do require an experienced developer to compile build a functional website.

So, despite the “free” tag, clients do face development costs to complete a functional website.

Proprietary systems are developed by companies that write customized software for resale. Clients often choose a pre-packaged system that best fits their needs and forego the development process that can take time and resources that open source solutions take to complete. They may lack the customization and flexibility offered by open source solutions but do offer a quick, “up and running” solution.

Both avenues involve extended costs that are often overlooked by clients—the internal cost of putting together a CMS website. Regardless of the route chosen, building and maintaining a website consumes considerable resources internally to bring to launch and manage it moving forward.