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March 03, 2003 New Thinking: Why content management software hasn't worked

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Why content management software hasn't worked

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By [Gerry McGovern](#)

Content management software hasn't worked because it was badly designed and massively over-hyped. Software companies lied about their products, charging criminal prices for crap software. It hasn't worked because organizations didn't understand content. They wanted a quick fix. They issued specifications that bore little relation to what they actually needed.

In February 2003, Jupitermedia released a report entitled "Web content management: covering the essentials, avoiding overspending." It stated that, "over-complicated, end-to-end packages can as much as quintuple Web site operational costs over human alternatives. In fact, 61% of companies who have already deployed Web content management software still rely on manual processes to update their sites."

According to Jupitermedia analyst Matthew Berk, "Business executives often mistakenly view content management as the silver bullet that will free them from IT constraints. All too often, content management solutions don't live up to that expectation, creating frustrated business executives and IT staff who somehow have to squeeze return out of this hefty investment."

Content management software didn't work. That doesn't mean it can't work. Here's what software companies need to do:

1. Stop telling lies. Stop selling slideware. Stop telling potential customers that you have features that you don't.
2. Get off the technology trip. Ban the use of the word 'cool' within your company. Put the new-feature-addicts into cold turkey. Your products are often so feature-rich they give organizations gout.
3. Focus on simplicity. Make sure your product does the fundamentals well. Publishing content is not nearly as complex as it is made out to be.
4. Set realistic sales targets. Stop pressurizing your sales people to deliver sales figures that they simply can't deliver without lying.
5. Hire people who understand content, not just those

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Here's what organizations thinking of buying content management software need to do:

1. Get real. New software will only solve a small part of your content problem. If you want great content you need great people far more than great software.
2. Put an editor in charge of the purchasing decision. By and large, IT managers don't understand content. Nor do marketing executives.
3. Spend the time to properly specify what you need. What is it about so many organizations that they never seem to have the time to do things right?
4. Get away from the kitchen sink specification. Specify what you need, not what you want. Yes, we'd all love these fancy extra features. But the more features, the more costly to install, and the more complex to operate.
5. Stop thinking you're so special. Standardized solutions can deliver a much faster, cheaper result, that is much more satisfactory to the reader.

Content management software has got a lot better. Remember the vapor-slides that companies peddled three years ago? Well, there is now generally robust software where that vapor used to be.

But do you need such software? Most companies don't. I know organizations that are successfully running massive websites with Microsoft FrontPage. They can do this because they have excellent editors and writers, and because they have well-defined, well-policed publishing processes and policies.

Remember, it's really hard to make publishing pay. If you're investing in expensive software, you better have a very good return on investment justification. Otherwise, you might be looking for a new job fairly soon.

[Gerry McGovern](#)



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