



Kiwi Website Design

& Digital Marketing

CMS

WHY YOU SHOULD GET YOUR WEBSITE BUILT
WITH AN OPEN SOURCE CMS

CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM



CMS

CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

CONTENT

Why You Should Get Your Website Built With An Open Source CMS	01
The Difference Between An Open Source And Custom CMS	03
Benefits Of An Open Source CMS	05
You're Not Locked In	06
They're Free	06
Platforms Are Constantly Updated	08
Millions Of Developers Working On It	09
Highly Flexible	12
Extensively Tested	13
More Cost Effective	15
Easier To Customise	17
Integration Is Easier	17
A Word About Security	18
The Best Option	20

WHY YOU SHOULD GET YOUR WEBSITE BUILT WITH AN OPEN SOURCE CMS



Your website can be built in a number of ways using a variety of platforms. One option is to build the website using HTML. This is referred to as a static website, and is not usually the preferred option because you cannot update and change the website's content – to do that you have to go back to a developer to get it coded. For this reason most websites on the web are built using a CMS – content management system. A CMS is a software platform that your website runs on. They have user friendly interfaces which mean you can change or update your website without knowing any code.



Even when you look at CMS platforms, however, you will find a range of different options. Broadly speaking they fall into two main Categories:

1

OPEN SOURCE CMS

2

CUSTOM CMS

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN **OPEN SOURCE** **AND CUSTOM CMS**



The code to an open source CMS is made freely available to the internet community so it can be updated, changed, improved and enhanced. Most open source CMS platforms also have plugins and add-ons developed by third parties – individual developers and companies – to extend its functionality.

THE MOST POPULAR OPEN SOURCE CMS PLATFORMS ARE WORDPRESS, JOOMLA, DRUPAL AND MAGENTO.



A custom CMS is also sometimes referred to as propriety CMS. They are CMS platforms developed by a specific website design company solely for their own customers. They write all the code, bug check the software, and update it.

BENEFITS OF AN OPEN SOURCE CMS

The reason why so many websites on the internet are built using open source CMS platforms, including websites from some global brands, is because there are many benefits of using such platforms. Here are the main ones.

You're Not Locked In

The primary reason for a website developer using a custom CMS is to lock you in. When you talk to them they will often mention things like functionality and security (see below), but the main reason is much more simple – it is a calculated business decision.

When your website is built with a custom CMS, the website designer will almost always retain ownership of the code and the licence for its use. This means you cannot change developers, or get someone else to work on your website. Usually if you want to change developers the best you can do is get the database of information so you have your content, and then start again from scratch. The website development company obviously hopes that locking you in like this will make it more likely you will stay with them as you won't want the hassle of changing. Being so tied to a single company is rarely beneficial to anyone except the company locking you in.

With an open source CMS you can change your developer when you want and they will be able to pick up where the other one left off.

They're Free

Open source CMS platforms are free for you to install and build your website on. All updates are distributed free, and you can also get many plugins and add-ons that are also free. This is because there is usually a fantastic community of developers all working together to make the platform better – when they develop a piece of code to deliver a specific function they make that code available for everyone. In reality it is not entirely free to use. For example, a website built using a CMS needs a theme. This is the skin of the website and determines how it looks. There are free themes available, but most people choose to use premium themes because of the added functionality they offer. The core CMS platform, however is free.,



Platforms Are Constantly Updated

Open source CMS platforms are in competition with each other, so there is a constant drive for innovation and improvement. Updates and new versions are regularly released, and there is always someone somewhere working on making the platform better.





Millions of Developers Working On It...

Following on from the previous point, open source CMS platforms are worked on and improved by many different developers. The biggest one, WordPress, probably has millions of people working on it around the world. This is why improvements and functions are added so regularly, but it also means bugs and issues are identified and solved quickly. It is a community of coders that is organically developed around the open source CMS and they work hard – and together – to make it better for everyone.

A single development company will invariably have a small team compared to the numbers of people working on an open source CMS. Even if they have tens or hundreds of coders working on it.





it (which for most website design companies is highly unlikely), they can never match the collective brain power, man hours, and eyeballs that work on the open source CMS options.

Highly Flexible

One of the downsides that results from this limited number of coders working on a custom CMS is they have to keep the code fairly tight. This is because every time you develop a new feature you run the risk of it having knock-on impacts elsewhere in the code. As a result most custom CMS platforms have a core functionality which the developers rarely stray from.



Extensively Tested



An open source CMS is tested to the point of exhaustion – that really is the only way to describe it. The “testers” include everyone from the developers writing the various bits of code to the designers using the CMS to build websites for their clients to those clients using the CMS to change the content on their website.

Everyone feeds into the machine and contributes to making the CMS better for everyone. This is also one of the reasons an open source CMS is updated so frequently – there are so many people spotting all the little errors and areas for improvement and getting them fixed.

A single website development company with a custom CMS simply cannot compete with this community of testers, regardless of how good their internal processes are, or how many clients they have on their books and using the CMS.





More Cost Effective

As already mentioned, the core code of an open source CMS is free. Even when you buy a premium theme and/or premium plugins, the cost for the software is still very small. This alone makes it more cost effective than a custom CMS, but there is another reason too.

Many people find themselves in a situation where they want functionality on their website that is not part of the core offering of the custom CMS. The website design company will often agree to develop this functionality but at a cost – i.e. you have to pay for them to write the code.





Easier To Customise

An open source CMS is also much easier to customise than a custom CMS, primarily because it is more flexible. This means you can be sure you will get the website you want, without having to compromise.

Integration Is Easier

Integration is always easier too. This could be integration with your CRM, stock control system, and more. This is because there is usually someone else who has done the integration before, so there are solutions, plugins and add-ons that have been tested and that work. A single website design company would not have the resources to develop and test a solution for every possible request, so they don't do it until they start working on your website. In other words, they learn as they go along.

A Word About Security

It is not possible to have a discussion about an open source CMS and neglect to mention security. It is a big problem and a serious consideration, and is often cited by website design companies as being the main reason for using a custom CMS, i.e. they don't believe open source CMS platforms are secure enough.

The argument for custom CMS platforms in this regard is that because the code of an open source CMS is freely available, it is possible for hackers to find and exploit security vulnerabilities. With the complexity of the internet and modern websites, there are many of these vulnerabilities. As individual custom CMS platforms are not widely used, hackers would not be familiar with the code – in fact they probably don't even know it exists.

The reality is a hacker could probably break into most custom CMS platforms if they really wanted to, but they instead go for the low hanging fruit – vulnerable websites built using an open source CMS.

Note that sentence uses the word “vulnerable”. In other words, not all websites built on an open source CMS are a security risk.

So long as the following four principles are adhered to, a website built using an open source CMS will be as secure – and probably more secure – than a website built using a custom CMS:

1

Passwords

if you use the username admin and a guessable password, your website will get hacked. It might not be today or tomorrow, but it will eventually happen.

The first step to having a secure website is to use more descriptive usernames, and randomly generated passwords.

2

Updates

updates to the CMS core files and updates to plugins must be applied as soon as they become available. Usually these plug holes, so every update makes your website more secure.

3

Reputable themes and plugins

reputable themes and plugins are updated frequently, so they should be used on your website exclusively

4

Security plugins

your developer can also install security plugins that monitor traffic trying to gain access to the website's files. For example, one plugin that is commonly used limits login attempts. This prevents bots – computer programs – trying to guess your admin password by repeatedly attempting to log in.

The Best Option

For cost effectiveness, flexibility, robust code, and stunning design, it is always better to use an open source CMS over a custom CMS. This is why global brands like Sony, TechCrunch, The New Yorker, MTV, PlayStation, and more all use open source CMS platforms, usually WordPress.

