



Content Company, Inc. > 525 N. Lombard Ave. > Oak Park, IL 60302  
www.contentcompany.biz > 708.217.3922 ph > 708.575.3450 fax

## Top 10 Rules to Make Your CMS Rollout a Success

by Hilary Marsh

*May 2004—Originally presented as a talk to the Chicago user group for Stellent, a content management system*

### These are not about IT!!

- If a CMS is bought based only on technical specs, it has a high risk of failure. Budget wasted, expensive “shelfware.”
- “Business requirements gathering” is not enough—language issues, perspective, priorities, motivation, change management.
- If only IT people use the CMS to enter content, the effort’s ROI will not be significant.

### 1. Content management is not the same as content management software

- Content management software cannot
  - create order where there is none.
  - force people to participate in the publishing process.
- Good Web content needs a publishing process behind it, to ensure that it
  - is accurate, consistent, up-to-date and on-brand.
  - meets the goals of the author and organization.
  - serves the needs of the reader.
- Content management can happen without software.
- Processes drive the CMS technical requirements (not vice-versa).

### 2. Understand the assumptions behind the CMS

- that information is published (i.e., that it is edited, reviewed, approved) , vs. posted.
- that there is a process similar and explicit enough to be automated.
- that the website will have enough content being updated often enough that it will warrant a substantial investment.
- that communications or marketing currently plays—and should continue to play—a gatekeeper role on all content.

### 3. Understand communication goals for content management

- Content management technology was invented to accommodate publishing schedules of news websites —>structured, similar content published very frequently.
- Corporate environment is different: sporadic schedules that differ by content type and department, with content that varies greatly in length, format and style.
- Technology can’t fix communication issues or challenges—if it’s broken in print, it will stay broken online.
- The Web makes corporate silos more obvious—a CMS can’t fix that either. (It can inspire change, though....)



Content Company, Inc. > 525 N. Lombard Ave. > Oak Park, IL 60302  
www.contentcompany.biz > 708.217.3922 ph > 708.575.3450 fax

#### **4. Develop requirements with (not just for) business users**

- What does our content management system need to do? (not “what does this CMS do?”)—CMS selection and setup should be driven by needs of the content owners, not product features alone.
- Getting communications, marketing and business to articulate goals will drive buy-in at all levels, as well as distributed budget and ongoing commitment.

#### **5. Define roles & responsibilities**

Identify who on the team will lead and participate in the following:

- Select CMS
- Inventory content
- Conduct gap analysis
- Interview audiences and stakeholders
- Determine content types, define templates, develop permissions, assign roles and groups
- Develop workflows
- Set guidelines: publishing schedules, editorial style, adding sections/users/content
- Training in Web writing, CMS

#### **6. Work closely with communications and marketing**

- “Your” CMS is supporting their goals—working together to meet the needs of the corporation.
- You’ll be stronger as allies, complementing one another’s strengths.
- The website’s success is theirs, yours and, ultimately, the corporation’s.
- When customers are happy, everyone wins.
- Internal marketing comes from success.

#### **7. Make sure HR is involved**

- Change management is tricky, and technology alone cannot change culture.
- To change their behavior, people have to be motivated, recognized and rewarded.
- Top-down is key—make executives understand the value of CMS.
- For an ongoing commitment, reward must be built in.
- Must be more than just empty talk.

#### **8. Recruit the naysayers**

- Fact: There will be people who are skeptical about the value of managing content, and especially of using a CMS to do it.
- Tactic: Enlist the skeptics to serve on your selection and governance committees. Their presence will ensure that you create a solution that can withstand tough questions. By involving them in the process, they will become evangelists for the results.



Content Company, Inc. > 525 N. Lombard Ave. > Oak Park, IL 60302  
www.contentcompany.biz > 708.217.3922 ph > 708.575.3450 fax

### **9. Insist on an ongoing governance team—IT should be part of it, but shouldn't run it**

- Involve people from IT, marketing, communications and business—ideally, the team would have been formed to help choose the CMS.
- Each group offers unique input on your organization's processes and priorities.

### **10. Set up your CMS so it can serve your needs for several years**

Content management needs to have the most flexible possible structure.

Some suggestions:

- Use general templates vs. rigidly defined ones.
- Make your templates object-based vs. page-based.
- Don't store content based on site sections.
- Keep links and metadata independent of the content.
- Create workflows by role instead of name, to allow for job changes.

#### **About the author**

Hilary Marsh is president of Content Company, Inc., a communication consultancy helping companies create and manage multichannel, branded messaging.