

Why Small and Medium-Sized Businesses Need Content Management.

by Andrew Webb, Director of Internet Solutions

Web content management systems (CMS) enable non-technical people armed only with a browser to update their own website content. If your organization cannot call on a webmaster or designer with server access and tools such as Dreamweaver, how do you plan to make quick changes? If your site doesn't get the attention it needs, it doesn't fully support responsive communications and marketing directed to your most important audiences.

Here's the key point: in a world where information is moving as fast as it is, content management is not simply a utility; it's an essential part of your marketing weaponry. In terms of online marketing, other tools and innovations certainly get a lot more buzz – just search for "Twitter marketing" and see how much enthusiasm is out there for Twitter as a way to grow your business. But for most small or mid-sized businesses, especially those in the B2B marketplace, the priority must be to control your website first, and to create buzz second. This means:

- Fresh, relevant site content that draws your visitors in and keeps them coming back...
- ...along with calls to action that change visitors into prospects.

Whatever else you do, your website is at the core of your online marketing. And you need to actively manage it.

CMS: The Options

As a full-service Internet solutions provider, Quicksilver offers a time-tested solution, [QuickFlex.NET](#), that takes account of marketing realities (resources and budget) in small and mid-sized organizations. Before describing QuickFlex, a little context about the many flavors of content management on the market today:

- Enterprise solutions (from providers such as SDL Tridion, Interwoven, Fatwire and Vignette) serve organizations with more than 1,000 employees. Buyers of these products expect CMS to not only store and publish content but also boost sales conversion rates and improve customer service. They may be managing multiple sites, and be looking for help with multivariate (A/B) content testing, pushing content to mobile devices, analytics, and integration of CMS with customer relationship management software.
- At the other end of the spectrum are simple blogging platforms. Blogging is pure content management. However, you can also use a blogging product like WordPress to create an entire website with a custom home page and the blog as one of the sub-pages. For some, this is a great option: you can be up and running quickly, and costs are low (basic blogging is free).
- Between these options is a wide and somewhat confusing range of offerings and technical platforms (PHP/SQL, Java, .NET), with a varied menu of CMS capabilities. For example, changing the text on a page is a standard CMS task; but updating an online calendar or managing the size and timing of ad banners on your pages are more complex tasks requiring additional functionality. More modules tend to mean higher costs. As with many software decisions, the choice is often between build and buy.

Why Small and Medium-Sized Businesses Need Content Management. (continued)

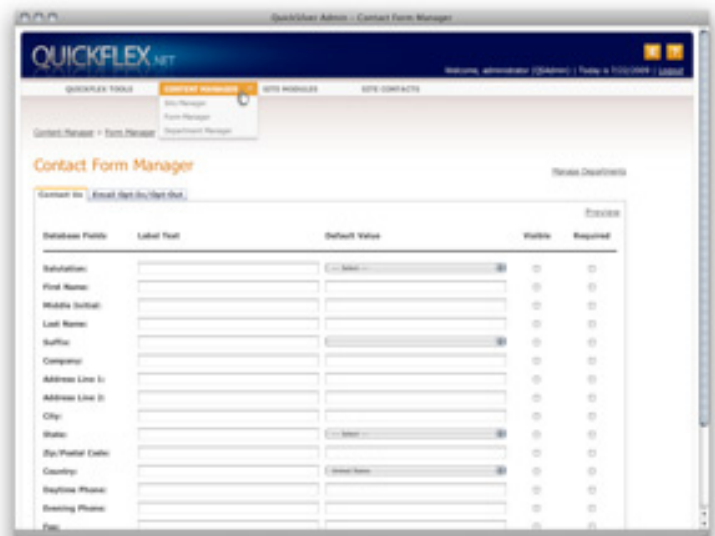
Quicksilver's CMS solution

Quicksilver's solution, [QuickFlex.NET](#), is part of this varied landscape. We have offered CMS to our clients for 10 years, with QuickFlex forming the core of sites from 10 pages (e.g., [www.txmedweb.com](#)) to large, dynamic sites that play a prominent role in revenue generation (e.g., [www.cunard.com](#)). Recently we redeveloped QuickFlex to incorporate improvements in the underlying Microsoft technologies, an upgrade which among other advantages means more efficient code and more secure websites. In planning the redesign, we took the opportunity to ask a couple of critical questions:

- For the companies and organizations that we typically work with (SMBs), which CMS capabilities help them get the most value out of their online assets and their marketing budgets?
- What is the best way to deliver CMS to those clients?

The answer to the first question is reflected in the functionality we included in the latest release of the software. Our [QuickFlex.NET demo video](#) provides a visual overview. In summary, however, the current release enables our clients to manage the following kinds of site content:

- Page content (text, image, video, etc.)
- Forms (e.g., contact form)
- Events calendar
- Advertising banners
- Links and clickthroughs
- Downloadable files (e.g., PDFs)
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Newsroom



An inside look at Quicksilver's *QuickFlex* Content Management System

In addition, there are administrative functions for:

- Managing automated email responses to Contact Us submissions
- Managing contact data collected by the site
- Setting up content editors and controlling their site access and editing rights
- Viewing reports on content management activity.

The answer to the second question is that QuickFlex.NET is a hosted solution. Sometimes described as 'Software As A Service' (SaaS), this means that the client does not have to own or develop software. Instead, Quicksilver integrates the core application with the client site, and the client pays Quicksilver an annual licensing fee for an unlimited number of users. Client marketing groups do not require any technical knowledge to use and benefit from the integration of QuickFlex.NET with their website.

Why Small and Medium-Sized Businesses Need Content Management. (continued)

Customizing QuickFlex.NET for Field Trip Factory

Field Trip Factory is a small, but vibrant Chicago company that promotes free field trips on behalf of supermarket chains and companies like Petco. Teachers and other trip leaders visit www.fieldtripfactory.com, find a field trip in their zip code for a class or scout group, select a date and time slot, download pre-trip materials, and even get sponsorship for the cost of the school bus.

Field Trip Factory is evolving – from its origins as a booking site for predominantly K-8 groups, to a community-focused resource for groups of all kinds looking for experience-based learning opportunities. So the new site had to meet the following requirements:

- Appeal visually to a wider set of audiences and age groups, from elementary school teachers to senior citizens
- Become a destination for group leaders seeking ideas for field trips and group activities, not simply a booking engine
- Support more aggressive marketing, with advertising banners targeted to the location of the visitor
- Make it easy for staff to maintain content, including the quick addition of new field trips, without HTML or other specialized skills
- Integrate with the existing scheduling system and database, so that marketing information and the booking system information remained in synch.

These requirements go well beyond simple management of page content. Yet, as we noted earlier, control of content is intrinsic to effective marketing. QuickFlex.NET turned out to be a good solution for Field Trip Factory on both scores:

- It gives the sales, marketing and customer care teams at the company day-to-day control of all website content, from home page text to FAQs
- The Ad Manager module is integrated with geo-location data so that visitors can be served advertising based on which state they live in
- Quicksilver built a custom module for setting up new field trips. Despite the extensive information elements related to each new field trip, this editorial task remains largely a copy-and-paste process.
- A nightly batch process keeps the data in synch on both the site and in the booking database

CMS may look functionally like maintenance, but that's a short-sighted view. You don't have to be selling products, and have a catalogue to maintain, to justify CMS as a marketing asset.

Andrew Webb has been working in marketing and communications for 20 years, and put his hand up to manage his first Internet project in 1996.