

# **Beyond Customer Experience Management: What Your CMS Really Needs to Deliver**

## **Completing The Global User Experience**

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## Table Of Contents

Introduction	3
Defining the Global User Experience	4
Where It All Begins: Customer Experience	6
The Write Stuff: The Content Creator Experience	8
Not Just for Coders: The Developer Experience	9
No CMS is an Island: The Integrator Experience	11
Vendors Matter: Why Even a Great Global User Experience Isn't Enough	13
All Together Now: Selecting the Right CMS	14
Appendix: Case Studies	15

# Beyond Customer Experience Management: What Your CMS Really Needs to Deliver

## Completing The Global User Experience

### Introduction

Selecting a new or replacement CMS is one of the most strategic technology decisions you can make. Select the wrong CMS and you will struggle to attract, engage, and retain customers. Why? Because personalized, engaging, dynamic, and high quality experiences are key to attracting and retaining customers—in short, they expect those experiences and will leave if they don't find them.

Selecting the right CMS is important because it is a primary tool in providing those superior customer experiences, as we'll see in this paper. Moreover, it is the hub that connects and drives many of the components that make up customer experience.

But what constitutes a great digital experience and how does an organization solve the complex equation of providing that experience? The customer-facing digital experience aspects are well known—great content, personalization, compelling user interface, availability across multiple devices and channels, and so on.

What is much less obvious, but equally important is the “back end” of the experience. That is the user experience provided to the content creators, developers, and partners and systems that must integrate with the CMS—the foundation of great customer experience. Collectively, the experiences can be described as “the global user experience.”

The heart of that experience is a modern CMS; in fact, delivering compelling digital customer experiences is virtually impossible without one. But selecting the right CMS is challenging—there are many to choose from and it can be difficult to differentiate products. After all, most CMS vendors promise to deliver superior digital customer experiences.

But here's a fact that many CMS vendors overlook: creating great digital customer experiences, the outward facing role of a CMS, requires an orchestrated approach by the “other users” of the CMS: content creators and developers. It also requires the use of tools and content that reside outside of the CMS. The best solution is a well-architected CMS that provides core functionality tuned to the needs of content creators and developers, while easily integrating with enterprise and third party tools and applications to provide the “global user experience.”

## Defining the Global User Experience

Since you are reading this whitepaper, it's likely that you have a role in ensuring that your organization provides the best possible customer experience, no matter what the channel. Yet, providing a personalized and seamless experience to customers across myriad devices, touch points, and stages in the relationship is a big challenge; one with which many organizations struggle.

One reason they struggle is that customer experience is only part of the equation, specifically, the goal. The other parts of the equation that achieve that goal are content creator experience, developer experience, and integrator experience—in total, the “global user experience.” The diagram below depicts the fact that, while customer experience is the goal and often the most focal point of a CMS buying decision, in truth, that experience is only the tip of the iceberg. The less visible content creator, developer, and integrator experiences support and define the customer experience—they keep the customer experience “above water.” And, as with icebergs, the danger lies in what you don't see.

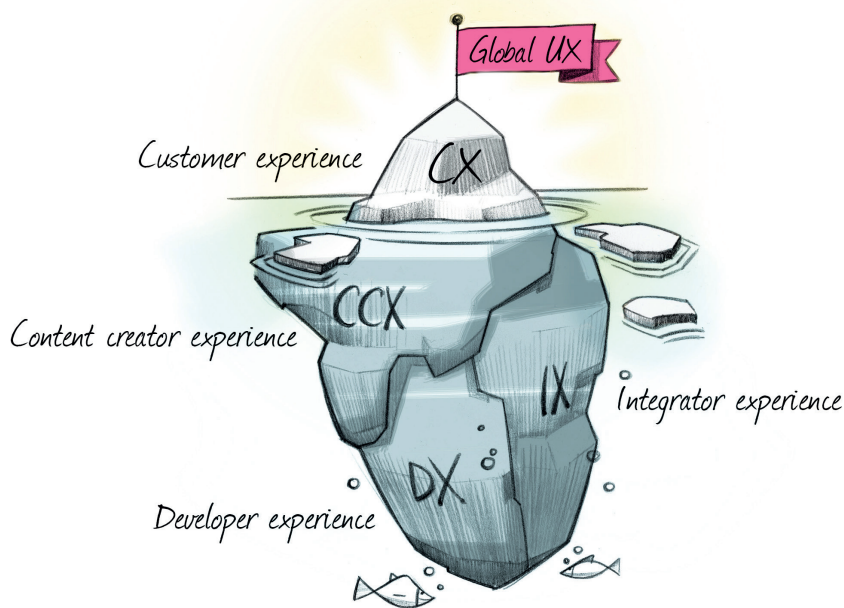


Figure 1:  
The Complete Global User Experience

The relationship among the experiences can also be displayed as an equation as shown below where customer experience (CX) is equal to the product of the content creator experience (CCX), the developer experience (DX), and integrator experience (IX).

## GLOBAL USER EXPERIENCE


$$CX = CCX \times DX \times IX$$

Figure 2:  
Global User  
Experience  
Equation

In other words, the back end experiences define the quality of the customer experience—if they are lacking, so too will the customer experience. Note the multiplier effect of the collective experiences: more than just the sum of the parts, customer experience improves exponentially with the interplay of the global experience components.

The equation is simple, but providing a compelling customer experience is a complex undertaking no matter what the nature of the business or enterprise. It requires a range of talents including authoring, curation, story telling, design, and development, testing, optimization and deployment—and the tools to effectively support those diverse skill sets.

Great customer experiences are predicated on the effectiveness with which a CMS provides those other experiences—in effect, a well-designed CMS inspires better performance on the part of content creators and developers, yielding customer experiences that deliver more business impact. It also allows integration of familiar and new tools to enhance the productivity and effectiveness of content creators and developers.

Key to achieving a superior customer experience is the ability for content creators, marketers, and developers to focus on the experience itself, not the mechanics of producing it. That requires a mature CMS solution that provides a balanced set of tools and capabilities for content creators, developers, and integrators.

## Where It All Begins: Customer Experience

It's no secret that customers are the center of the universe for most organizations. They are in the drivers seat and expect top-notch experiences and interactions with the organizations and companies they do business with. While the experiences may happen across a number of different channels, customers also expect a consistent and seamless experience, no matter where and how they interact.

Yet delivering on those expectations is hard. James Allen, partner at Bain & Company, reports that 80% of businesses believe that they provide a great customer experience, yet only 8% of customers feel the same way. Moreover, customers are attention-starved, fickle, demanding, and most of all, on the move—physically, socially, and interest-wise.

In short they are constantly changing and morphing, making customer experience a moving target. That means that the tools, processes, and people that deliver customer experiences must be agile; able to turn on a dime and anticipate, not react to change.

The following components can be considered the “basics” of digital customer experience:

- Delivering the right content at the right time to the right person in the right context; content in a form that is useful and usable no matter the channel or device;
- Content that is objective, focused, and “hyper-personalized,” based on a knowledge of a customer's demographics and activity profile;
- Navigation and search that is easy and forgiving and bridges to experiences that users are accustomed to;
- A visually rich, engaging, and interactive interface that enhances the overall content experience;
- Enablement of two-way conversations between customers and employees.

But in reality, customer experience goes somewhat further than just the digital experience. As the diagram below shows, customer experiences span a range of devices, channels, people, and business units. Virtually every business unit and every possible touch point plays a role in providing great experiences. Organizations must align and synchronize information of all varieties to ensure the consistency that customers expect.

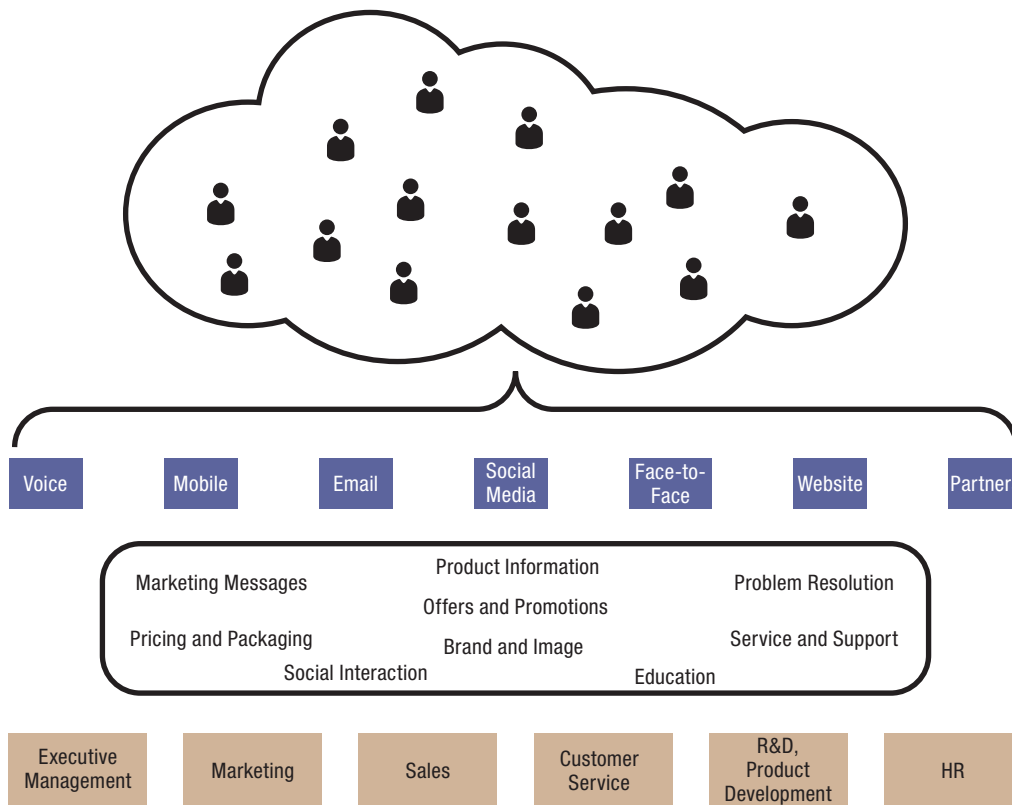


Figure 3: Customer Experience Dimensions

That means that the CMS must support not only digital customer-facing channels, but must also play a strong role in supporting the needs of call centers, sales staff, partners, and brick and mortar employees to name a few. The siloed information and business units of the past must give way to consistent messaging, information, and policies across all channels and touch points and the CMS is a key driver and enabler in that shift.

Providing a compelling customer experience on a continuous basis requires the orchestration of team members with diverse needs and skill sets. In the not-too-distant past, customer experience consisted of static text on web pages, print or PDF pieces, phone conversations, or customer service e-mail. Today, customer experience is comprised of targeted content, rich media, mobile services, social networks and communities, and more. The roles and skill sets needed to deliver those diverse components are equally diverse, as shown below.

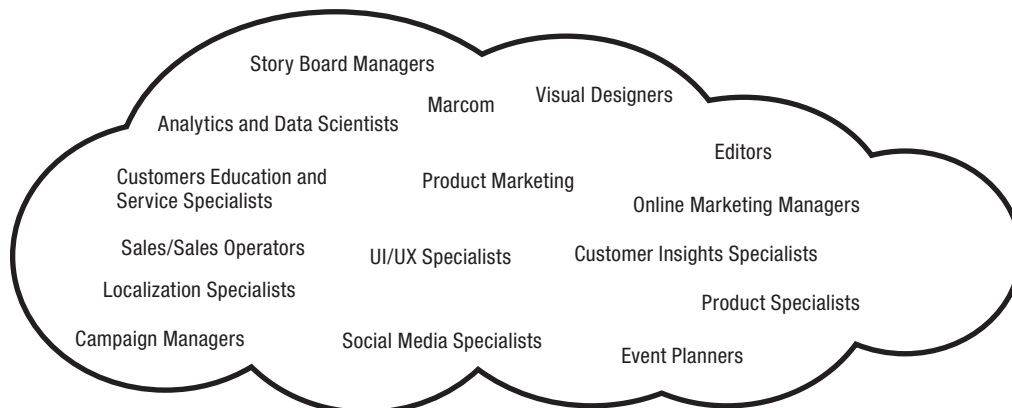


Figure 4: Customer Experience Roles and Skills

Many of those who help construct the customer experience are responsible for creating content, making the content creator experience a crucial part of the global user experience equation.

### **The Write Stuff: The Content Creator Experience**

Creating content, as the name suggests is a creative activity, or at least it should be. The content creator faces myriad decisions ranging from determining the needs of the target audience, to the appropriate mix of media, style, length, etc. While all of those decisions are being made, the content creator also has the job of creating storylines that are engaging enough to attract and retain the interest of attention-starved readers.

What's important to remember about content creation is first, not all content creators are professional authors and editors—as we've seen, content that supports the customer experience can come from almost any business unit in an organization. Second, because of the variety of content creators, most don't have (or want) deep technical skills or the time to learn complex systems. Finally, content creation actually involves multiple activities: authoring; acquisition of content from other sources; transformation, localization, tagging, and re-use of content; assembly and formatting; editing and quality assurance; and in some cases, publishing.

All of that means that the content creation functionality of a CMS and integrated tools needs to be easy-to-use; enable the use of browser, client, or integrated authoring environments; and must cluster functionality in a way that fits the workflows associated with each activity.

In addition to the diverse talent, the content itself is diverse. Effective content is comprised of a variety of media including text, images, video, audio, numbers, and social content to name a few. Content creators have to be able to create and acquire content from many sources and easily manage and (re)-assemble those components in the desired fashion. Content is also likely to be multi-lingual, adding another element of complexity. The Small Business Administration recently noted that 96% of all the consumers in the world reside outside the U.S. Many of those users want and need native language content.

CMS users consistently note ease of use as both a key requirement, but also a key failing in many, even most CMSs. Many systems require a high degree of technical knowledge and understanding of underlying content structures on the part of authors and content creators. Yet, as noted above many content creators lack deep technical skills and knowledge.



Poorly integrated or hard-to-use content creation tools not only negatively impact the content creator experience, they ultimately degrade the customer experience. Most notably, authors and editors won't use the tools and will resort to cutting and pasting and other work arounds. They may even stop contributing content altogether as in the Fives Group case study in the appendix.

The impact is not only on productivity, but also on the quality and quantity of content. It's rare to find frustrated writers who can deliver great prose. Content creators with well-designed tools, on the other hand, can focus on job number one, which is creation of the best possible content.

Some key CMS requirements for the content creator experience include:

- Familiar, easy-to-use tools for content authoring, management, previewing, and publishing that can support authors and editors at all levels of technical ability;
- Flexible, easily created and modified workflows that can support existing practices, but also help encourage new best practices;
- Ability to easily acquire, repurpose and publish content in many forms from many sources;
- Ability to focus on creating great content, not learning and manipulating tools;
- Empowerment of content creators to work in their own fashion, "where they live;"
- Ability to make system changes without invoking IT;
- Ability to seamlessly deliver content in the right format to any device or platform without human intervention.

CMS purchase decisions made without deep consideration of the needs of the various content creation and editing constituents almost always fail to achieve their full potential, if not fail outright. The content creator experience needs to be a primary consideration in selecting a CMS.

### **Not Just for Coders: The Developer Experience**

Line-of-business executives are increasingly driving CMS and other technology solution purchasing decisions. One example: Gartner has stated that CMOs will outspend CIOs on technology by 2017. With non-IT managers increasingly involved with, or driving CMS purchase decisions, consideration of IT needs sometimes takes a backseat to the customer-facing functionality of systems under consideration.

That is problematic, as developers are key to successful CMS implementation, even in cases where some or all development is outsourced. They are also critical to the longer-term business impact and value of the CMS as technology evolves and market needs and expectations grow. A CMS acquisition is not a one-time project—it is a living, evolving process.

Customer-facing digital products and services are competing for the attention of users and must be immediately usable and useful; engaging and interactive; and suited to the task at hand. That requires intense concentration and focus on the part of designers and developers, as well as the availability of built-in and integrated third party tools to realize their vision.

IBM's State of Marketing 2012 survey found that 51% of marketing respondents that identified their companies as high performing indicated that they had good relationships with IT. That same study also found that almost half of responding marketing organizations make technology decisions on a case-by-case basis. That means that they will increasingly be reliant on IT to integrate and knit together the pieces into a unified whole.

When it comes to corporate IT, there is a wide range of skills and abilities across different organizations. While some organizations have the skills and expertise that would be found at a commercial software vendor, others are lacking deep skills for developing customer-facing digital solutions and are under pressure from business executives to quickly develop and launch web and mobile sites and products.

Regardless of expertise, well-designed developer tools for creating customer-facing solutions will lead to measurable business benefits including faster time to market, more engaging design and appearance, and higher quality as the Knauf's case study in the appendix shows.

It's important to note, that, as in the case of content creators, there are numerous diverse roles and activities subsumed under the developer umbrella. Developers may be involved in the integration of CMSs with enterprise or third party systems; development of forms and templates; design and development of web sites, intranets, or portals; design and development of mobile apps; or development of digital products and services to name a few.

One direct impact of the diversity of developer activities and skill sets is the need for collaboration. Many organizations have moved from serial "waterfall" project management to iterative, agile approaches. In agile development, cross-functional teams design, develop, and test systems and products in short "sprints" where constant communication and collaboration are essential.

Critical CMS requirements for the developer experience include:

- Flexibility to use familiar tools and/or new best-of-breed tools for design, development, testing, deployment, etc.;
- Support for a variety of languages, databases, and frameworks;
- Tools for collaboration that are tightly integrated into the development environment;
- Well designed user interfaces and experiences to improve developer productivity;
- Ability to support existing development processes and practices including agile development;
- A CMS vendor that understands developer needs and can help improve their development practices.

The key to effective developer support is that the CMS and ancillary tools must provide a flexible, cohesive, and collaborative environment that enables developers to focus on high-value activities while letting the systems handle low level, low value ones. Also important to the developer experience is what the developer doesn't have to do. An effective CMS makes it possible for non-technical users to perform activities that require IT support on lesser systems.

Above all, developers need to be full-fledged partners in CMS selection, integration, deployment, and use. Selecting a CMS that meets their needs and fits well with their environment and work methods will enhance the likelihood of success.

### **No CMS is an Island: The Integrator Experience**

Even a CMS with the best core functionality isn't a static, self-contained system. A CMS needs to be able to grow and evolve and be extensible to meet changing needs--that requires the ability to integrate best-of-breed applications and technologies that meet the needs of users and evolving market demands. Even the most full featured CMSs can't have all of the pieces required to deliver and manage that complete experience. Market needs and technology evolution are simply moving too fast, and vendors that attempt to supply all the pieces will not deliver best-of-breed solutions.

The "integrator experience" encompasses the ecosystem of partners, external applications, enterprise applications, databases, and skills and resources needed to augment a CMS with all of the additional "pieces" needed to provide the desired customer experiences. The figure below illustrates just a sample of the external systems with which a CMS might have to integrate.

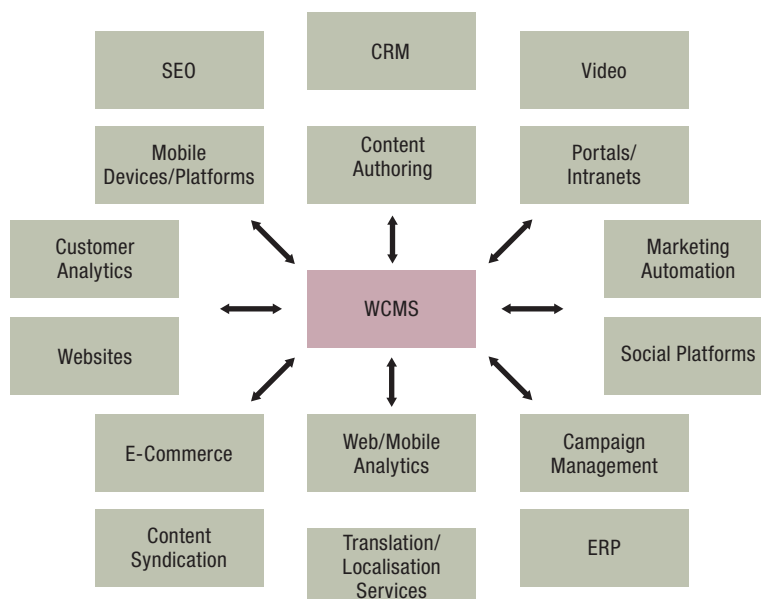


Figure 4: CMS Integration

The illustration makes it clear that no single vendor could hope to supply, much less excel at all or even many of the above applications. Instead, just as car manufacturers use partners to supply parts such as tires, headlights, and even engines, savvy CMS vendors partner with other vendors that simply provide better solutions than they could themselves.

Car manufacturers also recognize that their automobiles have to work with existing infrastructure—gas pumps, air hoses and the like, and that some owners will want to customize their cars with new parts. *In example, many organizations have e-commerce systems in place that are integrated with ERP and other systems—they likely won't want to incur the time and cost of replacing them. CMS vendors need to provide the ability to integrate enterprise and third party systems easily.*

Many vendors tout their application programming interfaces (APIs) as the solution to integration needs, but integration is more than just an API—CMSs need to work seamlessly with a variety of installed-based and best-of-breed third party applications.

Primary components of the integrator experience include:

- Broad and diverse partner ecosystem that includes needed capabilities that aren't part of the CMS;
- Uniformity and consistency of the user experience (including authentication) across modules and systems;
- Global, shared access to content resources;
- Flexibility to integrate with existing systems or new ones;
- Access to web services and APIs that require minimal programming to leverage;
- A core architecture that is modular and extensible and enables development and testing of modules and systems, both independently and in concert.

The latter point is important because vendors that provide monolithic, all-in-one solutions will lead to ripping and replacing existing systems during implementation, and vendor lock in over the long haul. Monolithic systems make it difficult to add or replace systems and components that may be lagging in performance compared with market standards.

The bottom line is, if integration is difficult, it will take more time or, worse yet, be done poorly or not at all. Poor integration drains energy, productivity, and innovation, leading to implementation delays and less desirable results. No CMS vendor can hope to keep up with all of the changing needs and innovations happening in the marketplace--creating the best global user experience and customer experience requires the ability to integrate enterprise and best-of-breed applications.

### **Vendors Matter: Why Even a Great Global User Experience Isn't Enough**

While picking the CMS solution that provides a great global user experience is vitally important, there is one more part of the equation that is crucial, and that is the chemistry and relationship with the CMS vendor. The vendor is not just the creator and purveyor of the solution, but more importantly a partner for success in achieving the best global user experience.

Achieving success in selecting and implementing a CMS requires a strong, trusting relationship with the vendor. Vendors that are approachable, supportive, and open are critical assets in the implementation of a CMS. A CMS is an investment for the future and therefore a relationship should be a lasting one based on a continued exchange of value throughout the relationship. Key things to look for in a vendor include:

- Willingness to do live demonstrations and not just provide slide ware;
- Approachability and trust that fosters open, two-way communications;
- A long term vision that ensures future proofing of CMS resources, but also is based on nearer term pragmatic decisions;
- Avoidance of technologies and tactics that lead to vendor lock-in;
- Willingness to partner with customers to co-innovate future products and services. Vendors should be willing to engage customers in developing road maps for product evolution;
- Long term customer relationships that demonstrate trust and achievement of desired results after implementing the solution.

Vendor chemistry often gets overlooked until after a purchase is made—by then it is too late. Vendor chemistry needs to be a primary component of a buying decision, just as consideration of the appropriateness of the solution to the business and technical requirements.

## All Together Now: Selecting the Right CMS

The selection of a CMS is where all of the experiences; the global user experience, should come together to provide a “wow moment.” While it is important for each stakeholder to evaluate their facet of the CMS, it is also important for the decision-making team to work together to assess the collective whole, viewing the CMS as the hub of the global user experience.

Imagine a family buying a car. There is a discussion around the dinner table that leads to the family heading to a dealer to look at a vehicle they believe meets their needs. Dad lifts the hood to check out the engine, mom is checking out the performance and mileage, and the kids are interested in the backseat entertainment. Each is satisfied with what they find.

Yet, even after that due diligence is done, the only way for the family to truly evaluate the total experience of traveling in the vehicle is to climb in and take it for a drive. A vehicle with a solid engine, good performance, and extensive entertainment technology may simply be uncomfortable or difficult to drive and hence not provide a good experience for the whole family.

CMSs are a lot like cars in that they may offer the functionality and features that some or even all of the stakeholders and users need, yet fail to offer the global user experience we have described in this paper. In other words, the system may have all of the requisite functionality, but fail to provide a comfortable, easy-to-use experience for all of its users.

In making a CMS selection, the decision-makers often approach the candidate solutions based on their own needs to make sure they won't get short changed. The problem with that approach is that, like the family doing due diligence on the vehicle, it misses the global experience and can lead to acquiring a system where the whole is somewhat less than the sum of the parts.

The key to understanding the quality of the global user experience is extensive investigation and discussion by the decision-making team about how the system will be implemented and used. Not only how it can support existing processes and workflows, but also how the users want it to work--their hopes and dreams. Like the family buying the car, it is important for all of the users to experience the system, first via in-depth demos from the vendor, and second, by actually getting hands-on time with the system.

This is where vendor chemistry and relationships come into play. The vendor should be willing and able to help the decision-making team get familiar with the system and learn how it will serve as a hub to provide not only the best customer experience, but the best experience to content creators, developers, and integrators--the global user experience. Above all, it's important for the team to devote the time and energy to really vet solutions and vendors. As we noted at the start of this paper, selecting a CMS is a strategic decision--the CMS solution that provides the right global user experience is a growth engine that helps power the success of any business or firm--the right decision.

## **Appendix: Case Studies**

### **Fives Group and the Power of Great Content Creator Experience**

Fives Group, a global supplier of process equipment with more than 6,100 employees, was struggling in using the company's intranet portal in facilitating global communications and delivering information, applications and enabling business processes. Its portal's content was rarely furnished with up-to-date content due to the technical complexity of the portal's structure, along with limited data input options. The solution was e-Spirit's FirstSpirit™ CMS which offered authoring environments for occasional and professional authors. The solution was implemented in one month and provided easy-to-use multilingual authoring support. In the words of Fives Group's Domain Manager, Peter Muller, the FirstSpirit™ integration helped "significantly increase the efficiency of our content editing and work processes throughout the company."

### **Knauf Gips KG and the Developer and Integrator Experiences**

In re-launching its websites, Knauf Gips KG, a building materials and systems business, planned the implementation of a modern Content Management System (CMS) to support the creation, maintenance, and administration of websites. Among Knauf's many requirements was the separation of structure, content, and layout to allow for reuse of content while ensuring a thoroughly consistent corporate design. FirstSpirit™'s open architecture and integration capability offered Knauf other advantages for: with the integration of Java and XML-based content management, existing IT infrastructures can still be used. In the words of Knauf's Matthias Will, "We were impressed with the clear and well-designed structure. Because of the platform independence, the system integrates seamlessly with our IT environment. The modular extensibility of the system was also an important aspect that helps us to be extremely flexible – particularly for future projects."



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