

1. WHO ARE THE CCMS PROJECT KILLERS?

Introduction

In recent years, there has been much debate on various approaches to solve the enterprise content management and publishing problem. Initially, most of the discussion revolved around technical issues ranging from the selecting the best authoring tool to designing the optimal database schema to support workflow and versioning. However, as the set of content authoring, management and publishing tools has matured, the focus of discussion has shifted from what technical components are best for a project to how best to implement any given set of components. Further, looking back on the myriad of failed content management initiatives across the industry, common themes begin to shape that help explain the reasons for so many misguided projects.

Although selecting the right technology does increase the overall probability of success of an ECM system implementation, it is far from being the key contributing factor. Additionally, adopting a proven content technology process that leads an implementation team systematically through the requirements, design, development and testing of a new publishing system is no means a guarantee that a project will be deemed successful.

There have been countless attempts to identify the common thread that binds these ill fated initiatives. Topics like 'Avoiding the Common Pitfalls of ECM Projects', 'Lessoned Learned from CMS Implementations', 'Top Ten Rules for Successfully Implementing CMS Projects' highlight the shift from what tools are needed to how to implement them. Yet, even as the implementation processes mature in lock step with the CMS implementation tools one looming question remains: *Why, still, do so many CMS initiatives fail?*

After eliminating *what* technical components are chosen and *how* the chosen components are implemented all the remains is *who* implements them. As anyone familiar with ECM implementations can attest to, there is a common cast of characters swarming around every project team each with the potential to contribute to the team's success or failure.

As the typical implementation team spends the vast majority of its time selecting technical components and learning new aspects of the CMS implementation process it has little time to collectively guard itself against the people lurking the shadows waiting for the opportunity to sabotage its project.

Director of Finance

<div>Director of Finance</div> <div>'There is no budget for this project.'</div>	After months of evaluating, meeting, designing, testing and lobbying, right when the plan is completed, and the technology is selected, the words, 'No Budget' lead to the abrupt end of many projects. More times than not, this utterance alone from the Director of Finance is sufficient to stop a CMS initiative in its tracks.
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Risks:

- Finance personnel don't have the technology background to fully understand the ROI of CMS's.
- Finance personnel have a bias toward preventing *any* new IT cost expenditures.

Mitigation Steps:

1. Avoid this situation by engaging the person responsible for authorizing the resources for your CMS project before any planning begins.
2. Establish a credible means to communicate the cost savings and revenue generation capabilities of the new CMS.
3. Learn the ROI criteria for selection of new project initiatives.
4. Build a business case that quantifies the advantages of the proposed CMS initiative.
5. Translate 'There is no budget for this project' into its real meaning: 'You haven't convinced me there is a sufficient ROI.'

Software Vendor

<div>CMS Vendor</div> <div><i>'That's no problem, our software handles it'</i></div>	<div>The relationship with the sales manager is one of the most difficult to manage during a CMS implementation. If you don't fully understand the limitations of the proposed CMS technology you're bound to set unattainable user expectations.</div>
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Risks:

- Vendor incentives to push their products and services will bias their CMS solution recommendations.
- Vendors have too little information to propose an optimal solution.
- Vendors have too much information regarding your operations to propose the lowest cost solution.

Mitigation Steps:

1. Realize that ultimately the success or failure of your implementation is your responsibility not the vendor's.
2. Insist that the sales manager allow you to speak with existing clients to help guide you through the implementation process.
3. Understand what the vendor does well (e.g. software) and doesn't not do well (e.g. implementation, support) from interviewing existing clients.
4. Negotiate every aspect of the proposed solution from cost to ongoing support, as no vendor has a monopoly on CMS solutions.

Corporate IT Architect

<div>Corporate IT Architect</div> <div><i>'It's not on our approved list of vendors'</i></div>	<div>Sooner or later your CMS solution will have to be integrated with your organization's IT architecture. If there is a standard set of technology that is required it may be difficult to justify a CMS solution that deviates from it.</div>
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Risks:

- IT architecture and support resources won't support the ongoing operations of your CMS initiative.
- Internal hardware and network resources will not be available to grow your CMS.
- Funding won't be approved without IT architecture consent.

Mitigation Steps:

1. Engage any organization involved with supporting the fully implemented CMS during the business justification phase of the project.
2. Look to extend standard technology to fit your needs before you lobby to have any new CMS technology approved.
3. Consider fully outsourced solutions to bypass these risks in their entirety.

CMS Consultant

CMS Consultant

'Just follow our 6 step Content Materialization Process and reusable content will materialize'

Although engaging CMS consultants for your implementation in some capacity is a good idea, you should be wary of deferring all of the key architecture and content modeling to them.

Risks:

- Preconceived notions will bias the CMS consultant's view of your project.
- Your consultant will overly complicate issues to justify his work.
- Business alliances will bias the CMS consultant's technical recommendations.

Mitigation Plan:

1. Select a CMS consultant with expertise in your industry.
2. Make sure your CMS consultant discloses all relevant business alliances.
3. Avoid the tendency to over analyze your content model.
4. Be sure that your CMS consultant not only completes the required analysis but also trains the project team on basic CMS technical and process concepts.

Internal Developers

Internal Developers

'Don't Forget Me'

Although you might rely heavily on external resources initially to design and implement your CMS, any successful system must have a strong internal IT team to support and enhance the system over time.

Risks:

- After your implementation, your internal development team won't have the skills needed to support your CMS.
- Your internal team might resent an external team of consultants architecting and developing the CMS.
- Parallel development efforts might cause confusion.

Mitigation Plan:

1. Develop an IT skills assessment and training schedule as part of your initial planning.
2. Make sure that internal IT resources participate in every phase of the project.

Technical Writer

Technical Writer

'Why can't we just use MS-Word?'

A key set of users of any CMS is the technical writers. If they aren't involved in the planning and design process, your project is headed for trouble.

Risks:

- Writers will place unreasonable technical requirements on the system.
 - Many of the undocumented workflow and content rules that writers follow will not be built into the CMS.
 - Writers will complain about the extra burden placed upon them to write and tag content.
 - Writers will complain about the loss of stylistic control that they have over documents.
- Mitigation Plan:**
1. Have technical writers manage all content modeling activities.
 2. Demonstrate any changes to the CMS authoring environment early on the in the project.
 3. Train writers on core CMS concepts so they can more easily accept the loss of stylistic control and extra content tagging tasks that will result from adopting a single source CMS methodology.

International User

International User <i>'Vo ist meine Content'</i>	Today large-scale CMS's typically involve managing content that support operations around the globe. Any user community that will require foreign language support must be identified before the project begins.
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- Risks:**
- Short sightedness will prohibit the expansion of your CMS into other locations.
 - Your content model and distribution platforms won't support foreign languages appropriately.

- Mitigation Plan:**
1. Identify all languages that are currently being used or will probably be used in the near future.
 2. Include the set of CMS languages in all user interface, data conversion and composition development.
 3. Ensure that ongoing foreign language translation is handled in your future CMS workflow.
 4. Identify required languages that often cause technical problems including Arabic, Hebrew, Hindi and Chinese.

Conclusion

Avoiding this dastardly group of saboteurs while adopting a reasonable implementation process and selecting one of the many industry proven technical platforms will get you off to a good start with your ECM project.

