

Taming the Content Tiger

Make Your Organization Competitive

Larry Bowden, Vice President, Portals and Mashups, IBM Corporation

Since the dawn of the World Wide Web in the early '90s, organizations large and small have both benefited and been challenged by Web technology. A great deal has been written about various types of Websites, from on-line "brochure-ware" to robust e-commerce platforms, along with the difficulties encountered when evolving from one type to the next. In the early days of the Web, such evolution often required the development of net-new software technologies such as "shopping carts," version control systems, even Web content authoring tools.

Organizations today have the benefit of Web tools whose lineage can be traced back to the "one-off" solutions of earlier pioneers. Such solutions provided the inspiration for future generations of software developers, resulting in off-the-shelf software solutions that run the gamut of Web technologies, from Web application servers to Web portals, Web commerce servers, electronic forms and more. Perhaps the most valuable solutions available are those focused on Web content management (WCM).

Why Web Content Management?

Anyone who's ever used a computer has personally experienced challenges relative to content; challenges such as "Where did I save that document?" "What email folder did I store that note in?" "Is this the most current version?" or "How can I get five other people to review this before tomorrow?" Yes, we've all been there, so it's easy to imagine how such challenges increase when the topic changes to an organization's website. Even small websites can still include hundreds of pages, with the websites of larger enterprises made up of thousands, even tens of thousands of pages. Creating a website is the first of many challenges. Content must be kept current going forward. Approval processes are needed to prevent the publication of inappropriate content. New rich media such as animations and sound are becoming more ubiquitous. Talk about your management nightmares!

Which is why WCM systems are becoming so invaluable. WCMs address the many challenges of maintaining website content, primarily by empowering content-owners.

Instead of the old paradigm where a webmaster from IT authored and published all Web pages, WCMs allow everyday users and content owners to author and publish their own pages. WCMs also support workflows, ensuring that content is appropriately reviewed and approved prior to Web publication. By enabling content owners to self-manage content, WCMs help organizations large and small keep their content current, and their websites competitive.

It's all about the customer experience...

Now that we've discussed the fundamental benefits of WCMs, let's examine a more important consideration... *the customer experience*. Competitive pressures are ever-present, and are especially pressing in more challenging economic times. A Web presence has long been the rule, not the exception, and with all the many recent advances in Web technology—including Web 2.0 technologies such as REST services and Ajax that enable richly interactive Web experiences—companies today must exceed expectations if they expect to acquire (or even retain) customers.

WCM software can help companies gain the competitive edge they need. For example, IBM customer Healthways used Lotus Web Content Management software to easily deliver a personalized experience to members in a highly scalable, "plug and play" environment. As a result, Healthways streamline and simplify document management, improving staff efficiency.

...Especially in an ever-changing market.

The needs of yesterday's customers aren't the needs of tomorrow's, any more than yesterday's business model will continue to suffice. New opportunities arise at Internet speed, and can pass you by just as quickly if you're not prepared. While WCMs can help, organizations that choose to deploy WCM in conjunction with a Web portal gain many advantages that Web portals deliver, such as the ability to provide customers with content personalized to their preferences or past behavior and, role-based access to content and applications. Required as well in today's rapid Web proliferation is scalability and robustness to support hundreds of thousands of users anytime, anywhere.



Larry Bowden

Larry Bowden has more than two decades experience in IBM helping customers exploit the opportunities provided by information technologies. He currently is vice president, portals and mashups, responsible for the

development and delivery of Web-based products that help customers create differentiated Web experiences for their customers, partners, employees or citizens. Bowden is known for his ability to successfully bring new products to market and rapidly achieve market leadership. IBM WebSphere Portal and Lotus Web Content Management are among the products that have become market leaders under his direction.

For these reasons and more, IBM customer Augsburg Aktienbank AG chose a combined Lotus WCM/IBM WebSphere Portal solution, allowing them to:

- ◆ Relaunch the corporate Web site to provide a fresh, modern face to its customers and partners and implement a Web content management solution to enable efficient content creation and management;
- ◆ Implement a full-scope Internet banking and brokerage solution for customers and partners to replace current PC banking solution;
- ◆ Increase number of customers doing business online;
- ◆ Grow customer base;
- ◆ Enable provision of Web services to partners; and
- ◆ Streamline business processes.

But how do you get there? Organizations have been on the Web for some time now. As robust Web tools such as modern WCMs weren't always available, many organizations have their own "home grown" solutions. Other organizations, who could benefit from the capabilities of a combined WCM/portal solution, installed less open or scalable solutions that are currently limiting growth or inhibiting flexibility to respond to emerging business opportunities. Such situations can seem daunting, but aren't insurmountable. In the case of IBM customer Cement Australia, the solution involved migrating to a Lotus Web Content Management solution that delivered significant benefits, as exemplified by the following customer quote: "We wanted to leverage the existing SAP master data to ensure we maintained a single data repository," said Ian Norvock, collaboration and development manager for Cement Australia. "One of the prime requirements from the HR department was for an intuitive and user-friendly solution—a dynamic website. It made sense to

use proven technologies to build a solution that we had full control over, that was affordable and scalable," said Norvock.

Because, really, it's all about ROI. In the final analysis, business is business, and WCMs are simply yet another tool in a company's "Web arsenal." If a particular tool helps an organization achieve or exceed its goals, then this tool should be considered. The benefits of WCMs are many, from enhanced competitiveness by offering customers an exceptional Web experience, to openness and scalability made possible by combined WCM/portal solutions.

While there are several models in the market today to calculate ROI, here are five key areas that must be addressed.

1. Leveraging information: Organizations have invested many years and millions of dollars in making sure that key systems are in place that allow them to run their business smoothly be it HR, finance, manufacturing operations or even documents and files. Organizations that treat their content strategically as *information*, rather than as static or dynamic content, can achieve better business outcomes. Companies that want to improve their competitive position are looking for dynamic and intelligent approaches to create-publish-measure-improve content so that the right information, from disparate sources, is available to the right people to make the right decisions at the right time.

2. Enabling business flexibility: In these changing times, business flexibility that delivers exceptional user experiences and significantly reduces costs is key to long-term success. In fact, many customers we speak with share their struggles with repurposing their information to different outlets such as for websites and mobile access by their employees, customers and partners. A flexible infrastructure, with a single delivery model, will reduce cost over time by enabling organizations to leverage existing investments and achieve sustainable growth.

3. Empowering people: One of the topics that gets the least attention while calculating ROI is the cost savings and the increase in productivity when businesses give their employees and customers the ability to take more ownership of information. Giving customers and content owners the power to manage their own information helps customers in a couple of ways. First, lines of business, closer to the customers, can take faster action to respond to customer needs. Required then are easy to use tools, such as step-by-step templates, to enable content authors to quickly create, deploy, and maintain Web content. Similarly, providing rich content editing capabilities that mimic commonly used word processors reduces training costs and accelerates adoption by business end-users. Furthermore, end-user management

of content frees IT to concentrate on the technical, operational and strategic aspects of supporting and managing websites, thus using the IT skills more effectively.

Second, if organizations can deliver persuasive content-based websites with personalized and targeted information to end-users, this will increase return visits, improve loyalty, and open the aperture for more revenue.

4. Governance and risk management: Every organization that publishes information to the Internet is exposing itself to risk. The content published must comply with corporate guidelines, be reflective of corporate policies and direction, and be refreshed to stay up with changing market conditions. In dealing with WCM technologies, users should focus on making sure the WCM solution can help them effectively manage the risk of keeping content current, and not be distracted by whiz-bang features they might end up not using. Capabilities, such as role and profile-based access to content, workflow management, version control and ability to integrate these capabilities across myriad technologies are fundamentals that impact effectiveness and costs in governance and risk management of web content.

"In these changing times, business flexibility is the key to ensuring success."

As previously mentioned, website templates combined with ease-of-use technology can significantly impact the speed and effectiveness for organizations to deploy a more streamlined online presence. If these templates can be married to industry-specific policies, best practices, and governance processes, the benefits to organizations will be accelerated. IBM offers industry toolkits as additional aids to dramatically speed time-to-market and reduce deployment costs of WCM/portal-based solutions.

5. Optimizing your infrastructure: Another variable in ROI calculation is the cost to optimize your infrastructure such that everything works smoothly with minor or minimal effect to your organization. Large companies are already addressing this with a common and scalable architecture and security model. It is important for small to mid-sized businesses to look

beyond immediate needs of creating and maintaining a small footprint on the Internet and consider how they can better leverage an online presence for growth.

As you know, nothing beats quantifiable returns in securing executive board support. IBM customer TRI-WEST realized such returns:

- ◆ Better customer service and improved business agility;
- ◆ Increased productivity for sales reps on the go, saving approximately US\$750,000 per year;
- ◆ Eliminated VPN and associated software support costs, saving US\$130,000 per year; and
- ◆ Drastically reduced direct mailings, saving US\$57,600 in the first year.

Or is it really all about people? Any organization is only as good as the people associated with it, be they employees, business partners or suppliers. WCMs enable organizations to better empower their most important assets... their people. Imagine information technology that empowers instead of limits, that truly is the sum of its member parts. Then imagine combining such technology with an open and scalable portal platform that expands such empowerment throughout the organization and beyond... to business partners and suppliers.

A true game-changer in the past couple of years is the proliferation and wider adoption of social technologies. With easier access to the Internet and these social tools, the average visitor can now make their voices and opinions heard. This should be taken seriously by organizations that want to find ways to convert these Web site visitors into a long pipeline of loyal consumers and partners. Organizations should also consider integrated web analytics to better understand user behavior on their Web sites with the analytics feeding an adaptive infrastructure that responds dynamically to usage patterns and optimizes the visitor's Web experience. In response to customer inquiries, IBM is currently working on initiatives to provide a self-optimizing portal to do just that, i.e. to sense, analyze, and automatically respond based on usage or behavior detection of site visitors.

Given the fast pace in which information is accessed and shared, WCM vendors could keep adding more portal-like capabilities to WCM solutions. But WCM is becoming a fundamental part of portal solutions, driven by user demand for exceptional Web experiences. Times of change represent opportunities for organizations to tune in to the forces of change. Now is the time to get acquainted with the robust Web-based solutions available today. ■

For more information, visit www.ibm.com/lotus/webcontentmanagement or send an email to TransWCM@us.ibm.com.

Expanding Web Content Management

By Andy Moore, Editorial Director, *KMWorld* Specialty Publishing Group

I can't remember the first website I ever saw. But I bet if you saw it today, it would be hilarious. I don't need to tell you that comparing today's Web* to that of eight years ago is like talking about pre-Cambrian turbellarian worm fossils (don't bother looking; there aren't any).

But did you ever wonder how the Web became so advanced, so quickly? I did. So I called up Larry Bowden. Larry's the vice president of the "portals and mashups" (really, no kidding) division of IBM. He's a big-deal guy, an old acquaintance, and he took time out of his busy schedule to school me about Web content management (WCM).

My first question out of the box had to do with the shifting *ownership and stewardship* of business websites over the years. I basically said: It's well-known that first-gen WCM was more of an IT initiative than a business one, and neither side was very satisfied. Is that an accurate historical evaluation? To what degree has WCM begun to satisfy BUSINESS needs? And how do the IT guys feel about it these days? Are they playing nicely in the sandbox?

"In the old days, IT was required to implement Web content management, because of the complexity associated with it," began Larry. "No line of business could possibly have implemented it. But there would have been either a corporate communications or marketing team that was going to be doing the quote/unquote 'publishing' that had the final say."

So even back then there was a rudimentary, at least, partnership between IT and business. Maybe you could even call it a budding romance. But as we'll learn, it's a full-on love affair now. Hot stuff, too.

"This is what every WCM initiative over the years has been about: The communication or marketing officer was the decision-maker, but they wanted to move at a pace that IT couldn't even

fathom," said Larry. Realizing that might come off sounding a little harsh, he quickly added: "That's maybe not the exact quote I would want to use, but let's face it, back then it could take a week or multiple weeks to update information on a website. There were approval cycles, first of all, then a lot of IT management and control."

And he's right, of course. First of all, a lot of Web content management in the early days was manual...you had to know how to physically go into the belly of the beast and type in the changes you wanted. There were no clever GUIs or scripts or wizards; it was hard-core programming, pretty much. And probably as a result, those approval cycles stretched out over time because of the inherent disassociation—and perhaps misunderstanding—between the lines of business and the poor IT guy trying to interpret what they meant. Imagine a marketing officer saying, "Our messaging has to be more on-point with our target demographic." And the IT guy muttering, "That's gonna be a couple thousand lines of code. Better get another can of Jolt."

Nowadays, it's possible to inhabit the other extreme. "You don't even know IT is around, because you can go out to a software-as-a-service (SaaS) provider, buy the amount of WCM you need, and start publishing to a website right away. You can update a website in minutes now," he said.

Larry, reasonably, thinks the majority of businesses today is somewhere in between those extremes, but we're rapidly moving to a transparency that we couldn't have imagined eight or 10 years ago. "Now, line of business has enormous control, and that allows IT to do what they're good at: manage the infrastructure."

There are reasons why the world hasn't rushed into this second extreme Larry mentioned. One of them being:



Andy Moore

Andy Moore is a 30-year publishing professional, editor and writer who now concentrates on business process improvement through document and content management. Moore is the publisher of *KMWorld* Magazine and its related online publications.

Moore also acts as the editorial director for the "KMWorld Best Practices White Papers," overseeing their content as well as writing the opening articles for each of the white papers in the series.

Moore is based in Camden, Maine, and can be reached at andy_moore@kmworld.com

People can mess things up. In a great article in *KMWorld* (May, 2009), Stephen Powers and Tim Walters, Ph.D., senior analysts at Forrester Research, wrote: "Some of the problems that plagued first-generation WCM are inherent and will not automatically be solved with the technology advances of second-generation WCM systems. Most of the problems earlier WCM initiatives faced still exist today—because of people and processes, not WCM feature sets."

Sometimes there's a difference between what you *can* do and what you *should* do. "The technology allows anyone with authority to go in, change a paragraph and there—you've changed the website," said Larry. But in practice, he thinks, it comes down to how you manage that level of end-user control and flexibility. "Some sites need very structured and procedurally oriented approvals. Some sites, you don't care. A recipe website... go ahead and change it all you want. A Federal emergency website... you want to control the authority to change that!" he said.

Of course, today's WCM systems allow for any level of access, authority and approval. All WCMs have a built-in workflows that, depending on the nature and the level of risk associated with the content, can be routed through an approval cycle or to a content reviewer(s).

But Larry also feels that that the "governance" of Web content does not necessarily always need to be so strictly, under-my-thumb, controlled. "Here at IBM, we don't have a 100-page document that says what you can and what you can't publish to a blog or a wiki, for instance. We simply remind people of the business

practices of IBM, to be truthful, to make sure your information is accurate, and then you can go ahead and publish. But you're taking on the responsibility of representing IBM; make sure you do it in a professional manner. It's not exactly a procedure, and there's no one approving it...but there is a set of expectations."

(I put "governance" in quotes, because it has taken on a connotation having to do with legal risk management, etc., that may not be quite what it means in the generic, lowercase sense of the word, which is more in line with what we're talking about.)

I suggested to Larry that if everyone's an author under a WCM, isn't that like giving everyone a flame-thrower? "Half the marketplace is afraid of the Web, because they think someone might do something wrong. But the other half is aggressively taking advantage of Web publishing," said Larry, "because when the end-users act in a mature and responsible manner, you're able to outpace your competition, be more flexible and take on new innovations in ways you never could before."

I remarked that, to a lot of companies, that much release of control would be scary as hell. "We get asked about that a lot," he agreed. "As a technology company, we do try to stretch the envelope. But look at Wikipedia. You might think that there's great danger in letting just about anybody change content, make adjustments... that malicious groups could do some damage. But the wisdom of the crowd keeps those documents extremely accurate, without much formal governance. Still, the ease of use—*anybody can publish to the Web*—makes 'governance,' for the lack of a better word, the most important issue facing Web publishing right now."

The Why, Not the How

The subject turned to business objectives. We now know you CAN deploy a system in your company that allows anyone with the proper credentials to change, update and add to the corporate website. Now the question is: why? What's the business justification for even considering a WCM?

"At the end of the day, WCM is just a tool that you use to accomplish something," Larry answered. "The question is: what are you trying to accomplish? We think it's creating an exceptional Web experience. With an exceptional

Web experience, you increase your ability to attract new customers and retain those customers. You then increase your ability to cross-sell new things. If you continue to make your Web presence vibrant and new, it will become a trusted resource. And if they're coming to you, you know they're not going to your competition."

I asked Larry if customer acquisition and retention were the only reasons to invest in WCM. Isn't there also an efficiency argument to be made? Fewer people doing more work, etc. You know, the old "top line vs. bottom line" gambit. I struck a chord with Larry on that one.

"Funny you should ask that, because I talk about this in my keynotes all the time. People ARE also investing in WCM based on a return on investment argument. If you can retire old systems, save some money and get an ROI within a year, people will invest in that. But proportionally, most of the projects we're seeing are based on top-line improvement. You can save costs all you want—that's great. But if you're losing customers while you're doing that, because you're not keeping other people from attracting them away, you're not serving your business well. So companies see the value in buying better WCM right now."

And they're adding functionality that contributes to the value of the overall system. Larry explained: WCM controls the *content* you're delivering to the Web. Now the next step is to add applications, or content feeds or create forms to process loans... "This integration has always been part of the portal business, but adding portlets in *combination* with WCM is where the home-run is now," he declared. "People are enriching the Web experience by bringing these portal functions into it."

I asked Larry the stock question: "Pretend I'm a company with NO Web presence at all right now. Where should I start? Should I put together a team for 1. evaluation, 2. implementation, then 3. adoption over time? Are these different combinations of people? Or is there an immortal WCM team throughout that lifecycle?"

"There's a morphing of people and skills as you go through those phases. You mentioned 'evaluation, implementation and adoption.' I would have put a couple bullets before that: business objective, and then business scope, meaning how

am I doing this short-term and what do I plan to do long term. Only then should you start the evaluation, etc., process. During evaluation, you get line-of-business people who have to buy-in. During implementation, you have a different group; there's not too many line-of-business leaders who understand information architecture—and they probably don't want to. Then to support adoption, you need ease-of-use and to create successful smaller deployments that they can see and be comfortable with wanting to replicate," Larry said.

There are value/benefit arguments for both sides. Larry just thinks there's a better one when they merge. "Portals were originally developed to allow you to do online banking, look at your medical records, things like that... lots of security, deep levels of authentication. Web content management was originally developed to put your catalog online, make your products dance around the screen and get a transaction with a credit card. But those were two very different ways of constructing a website. What's happening now is that the two design constructs are merging into one structure.

"If you want to create a recipe website, go get an open-source WCM. If you want to create online banking or medical records, go get a portal. But if you want to have a universal platform that prepares you for the next decade and gives you the agility and flexibility to respond to whatever will happen in the market, then you go with the combined WCM and portal single navigation metaphor," he said.

"Here's one of the greatest dangers to watch out for, and I would include this under 'best practices': Because WCMs are so easy to deploy, a group will put one in and start using it to generate content. Then later, if you want to add applications, or dashboards or anything, you can lose that investment because you have to start over and re-architect the structure for moving forward. So it's very important to have a strategy first, and then a roadmap as to how you want to accomplish that strategy.

"You need a plan first. Quick and dirty is exactly that sometimes." ■

* (BTW: In case you're wondering, we use a capital "W" when we say "Web," because it's short for World Wide Web, which is a proper noun. We use a lowercase "w" for "website," because it's sort of a slang term. That may not be the best style choice, but that's what we do.)