Web Content Management Systems

Introduction

A Web Content Management System (also known as a WCMS) is a computer program used to create, edit, manage and publish online content in an HTML format. A WCMS facilities content creation and controls content, as well as provides many other important functions essential to the publishing of content on the web.

In the adult industry, many sites use some sort of WCMS system in order to automate the process of publishing video, text or photo content on their sites.

A WCMS used by an adult site may use some of the following features:

- Manage the overall front end "look and feel" of a site using some kind of template system.
- Support the compression or encoding of photo and video content into various web ready formats.
- Allow the publishing of content on a schedule. (Daily, weekly or monthly)
- Manage a database which controls all of the content's metadata, and allows users to search for content using various keywords.
- Allows users to interact with other users by posting comments about a particular piece of content.
- Allow users to bookmark particular pieces of content for later viewing. (Saving to their favorites)
- Allow the website administrator to manage when and how this content is displayed.
- Allow the website administrator to create categories by which the content can be classified and displayed.
- Control multiple sites through one centralized content storage area.
- Work in conjunction with password fraud systems in order to prevent users from sharing access information to protected areas.
- Allow users to view the content in multiple languages.
- Allow a database of metadata and content to be replicated easily to other servers as a means of backup or load balancing.
- Allow users to download photo content in zip or other similar formats.
- Allow users to view videos in streaming formats.

- Manage 2257 Records automatically.
- Provide statistics about which content users are viewing the most.
- Create top rated lists based on most viewed content.

Over the years WCMS applications have become a lot more complex, especially as new sites such as YouTube were developed using sophisticated backend publishing systems.

Some of the largest and oldest online adult companies typically develop their own customized WCMS application, which is catered to that site owner's needs, and over the years is refined. The cost of developing a custom WCMS can be extremely costly and usually beyond what smaller online adult companies can afford.

Until recent years, most adult sites had no choice but to develop a custom WCMS application in order to manage their content. There really was no other cheap alternative.
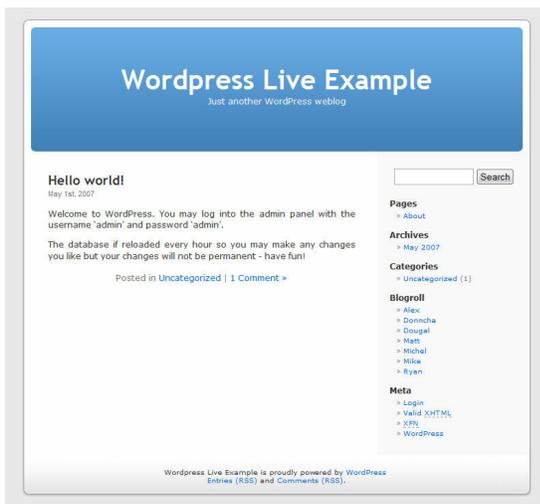
Today, however, there are hundreds of free (Open Source) or really inexpensive WCMS solutions which are available.

Open-Source (free) WCMS Solutions

One of the most popular is Wordpress http://wordpress.org.

Wordpress is the most commonly used free web application to manage content on the web.

Wordpress is of course primarily used as a way for webmasters to create blogs.

Wordpress is not really as WCMS program. It was designed just a way to host blogs. It

has many limitations to webmasters who want to use it as a method to publish content on their adult membership sites.

Firstly, it does not natively allow content to be scheduled in the future, nor does it allow content to be uploaded in any batch format. The templates used in Wordpress are fairly easy to use and configure, it would not require the expertise of understanding XSL files (for example) in order for you to make Wordpress achieve your desired look.

The largest limitation of Wordpress is that it was NOT designed to handle content in the manner in which a typical adult site requires. The generation of photo galleries, thumbnails, video content in multiple formats, etc.

In order to make Wordpress work as a an effective WCMS system for an adult site, it would require a large amount developing and customizing.

Another item to consider when using a program like Wordpress is how it works under a lot of load. A webmaster could spend many hours configuring and customizing Wordpress only to discover that Wordpress does not work well when hundreds or even thousands of users are trying to access hundreds or thousands of pages containing photo and video content.

 Ultimately Wordpress could be a good starting point but in my opinion, any professional Webmaster may find themselves outgrowing it quickly.

Another Open Source WCMS program is Joomla! http://www.joomla.org, a free WCMS system which has recently become very popular among webmasters.

The largest drawback I have found with Joomla!, is that its template system is very difficult to use and typically requires a good working technical knowledge in order to get it to look right.

It contains a WYSIWYG editor but it does not seem to work very well. Like Wordpress, Joomla! also requires a far amount of customizing in order to get it to function as most adult content driven membership sites do. These include; The ability to view content in the free and protected areas, scheduling content, working with galleries and video as well as publishing content on a schedule.

All of these functions can be developed within Joomla!, however, will require extensive knowledge of PHP.

Both Wordpress and Joomla! are very good "free" WCMS solutions. However, even though these programs do not cost anything to license, in order to get them to function effectively as adult content WCSM program, they will require major modifications. Unless you are well versed in PHP, you will be forced to hire a developer to customize these applications so that they can function as most adult sites do.
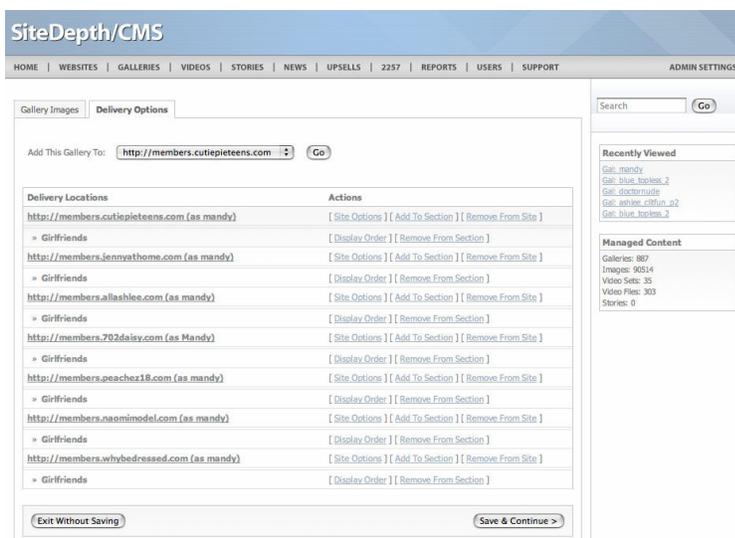
Even if you happen to be an experienced programmer, you may find yourself spending countless hours to configure a free WCMS program. An inexpensive WCMS program maybe a much cheaper and faster route to take.

Payed WCMS Programs

This brings us to some of the more popular and standard WCMS applications used by most of the adult industry. These include;

- Sitedepth
- Elevated X
- Mansion's MAS (Member Area System) Makers of MPA3
- Toomuchmedia's Carma (the company which makes NATS)

Sitedepth http://www.sitedepth.com is "boasted as only of the most powerful WCMS systems for the adult paysite." Sitedepth was first developed as an in-house WCMS solution for the maker's own sites at richcash.com.

This program has many cool features such as being able to manage multiple websites, organize content into sections, process images and split videos into multiple parts. Another benefit of Sitedepth is how easy it is to use it's web-based template editor, as well as its ability to automatic schedule content.

Of course without trying to sound like a salesman, Sitedepth does fulfill many of the traditional WCMS requirements of an adult site.

One of the main drawbacks I have heard over the years from webmasters is that Sitedepth lacks some of the most advanced features of other similar WCMS programs. These features include a multi-language capability, an ability to manage content easily or allow user interactivity, such as adding comments to content or bookmarking content.

Another drawback is that Sitedepth does not process videos as some of the new programs are starting to do.

At the time of writing this article Sitedepth cost breakdown is as follows:
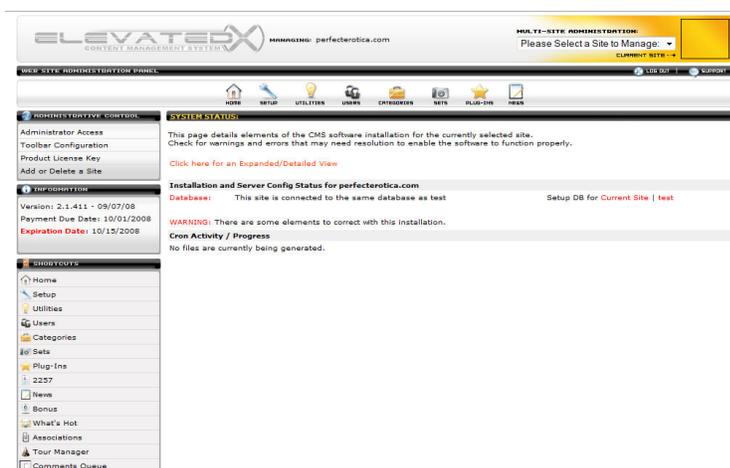
About $600 for 3 sites
About $900 for unlimited sites
About $4000 for the source code.

Sitedepth will run on many flavors of Unix with very little requirements (some being Zend Optimizer and ImageMagick – both of which are free applications)

One of the most intriguing part of Sitedepth from a webmaster's point of view (and a site owners') is that for around four thousand dollars you can purchase an unlimited license of the product including its source code.

Having the source code enables a webmaster to hire a developer to make Sitedepth do almost anything a webmaster can think of. If you are truly looking for a relativity cheap way to get a WCMS application and be able to customize it as your needs grow, Sitedepth is the only program in the market which I would recommend. I believe that the owners of Sitedepth are currently in the final development stages of a new version of the application to be released shortly.

The second WCMS program which has become very popular, and used many in the adult industry is Elevated X. http://www.elevatedx.com/

Elevated X has just recently launched its version 3.0 of its WCMS application. Elevated X is a very slick and feature rich application. Its administration area is very simple to navigate and easy to understand.

Elevated X is currently working on developing a multi-language option, which they owners say will be completed soon. This will by far make Elevated X the most feature rich WCMS applications on the market.

Some of the cool features of Elevated X include; content load-balancing, mult-level page caching, online video encoding and the ability to update your site from your iPhone.

ElevatedX has two price points, About $6000 to purchase the product or you can lease it for $150 per month. Elevated X Is installed by professional staff and comes fully supported.
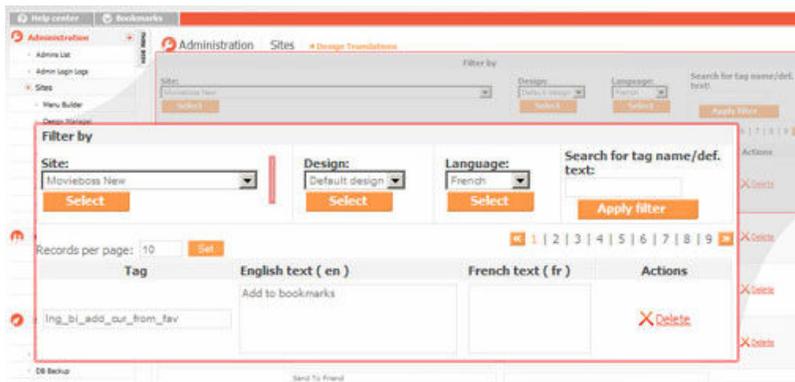
In my opinion it only has a couple of drawbacks.

Firstly, you cannot buy the source code, which means that if you want to develop anything on-top of the Elevated X application, you cannot unless you pay the makers of Elevated X and use their developers.

Secondary, I have found that the templates, although can do almost anything, require a good working knowledge of the XSL templating system. A very difficult to use system if you are not familiar with it.

Paysite CMS is another newer and very feature rich WCMS application.
http://www.paysitecms.com

Paysite CMS is similar to Elevated X, however, boasts a lot of more features that include; Rewarding member loyalty.
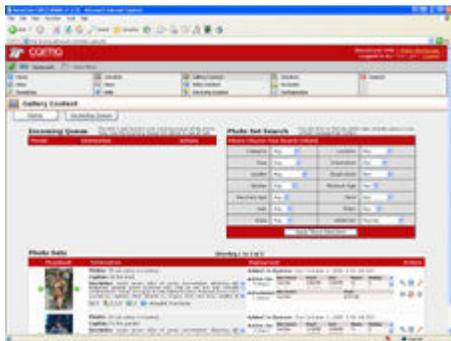
Paysite CMS also uses Smarty templates, which I have found to be a lot easier to work with. The program also comes built in with multi-lingual support, uses password Trojan 4.0 to manage brute force and password sharing, as well as allows for user submitted content, (similar to Redtube or other tube type sites.)

Paysite CMS has it all, there is no doubt that it comes complete with all the features a webmaster could imagine. Of course like Elevated X, the company does not allow the purchase of the source code. This makes it impossible to customize beyond what the makers have provided.

The other drawback (and in my opinion a real big one,) is the requirement of either purchasing the product for $30,000 or leasing it for $200 per month and being forced to host with their hosting company.

I'm sure many of your like to control your servers and where you host (especially if you are like me and love to constantly be shopping for the best pricing.) The idea of being locked into a contract with a WCMS program as well as hosting company is for me at least a deal breaker.

Carma from TooMuch Media - http://toomuchmedia.com/products/carma

Another program widely used in the adult world is Carma. Carma is produced by TooMuch Media, the same company which develop the very popular affiliate program NATS. Carma is also rich in features (although not as many as Elevated X or Paysite CMS,)

Carma is very simple to use and understand. The templating system is easy to setup and Carma can control (as do all of the rest of the payed WCMS applications,) multiple sites from one central backend admin.
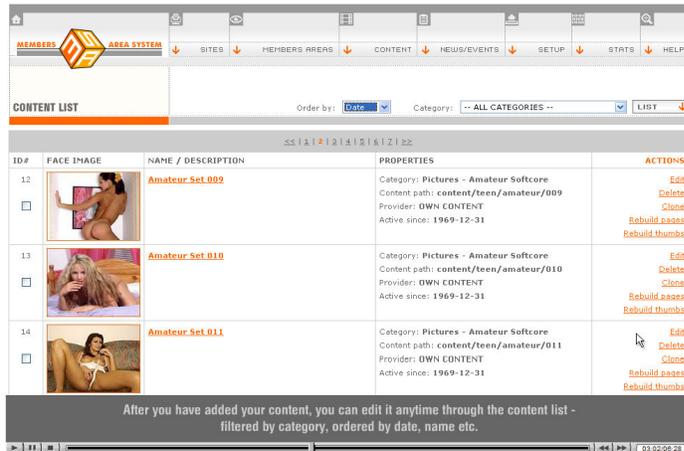
The greatest benefit of Carma is how well it works in producing content ready to be plugged into their NATS program. This of course allows a webmaster to easily add new promotional content for their affiliates.

Carma, like other programs ranges around the same price. A one time fee of $3500 which includes setup and installation. The program can also be leased for $150 per month.

One of the best features of Carma is that Too Much Media will install Carma for you and

setup and train you on it as well. Many other paid WCMS applications do not provide training, and you are usually left to try to figure out how to do most of it by reading a very large PDF manual.

The last WCMS program I will mention in this article is Manion Productions' MAS (member area system.) http://www.mansionproductions.com/mas

Mansion Productions are the creators of MPA3 (another similar affiliate program to NATS, and very widely used in the adult industry.)

MAS is also feature rich including; News, feedback functionality and ability to change templates easily.

MAS strength is the way in which its batch operations work. Content of almost any format can be uploaded and controlled quickly.

Like NATS and CARMA, MAS and MPA3 work well together and allow a webmaster to easily integrate the two as a way to provide free promotional material to affiliates.

Some of the advantages of MAS are; how well the templating system is to use, the tutorials are very clear and easy to follow and the support team at Mansion Productions are great.

One of the major drawbacks of MAS is its price. MAS has no lease option and costs about $4600 for a full license.

Conclusions

In conclusion choosing a WCMS for an adult site may be one of the most important factors in the success of your site. (billing being the second.) Your ability to control your content and how your site looks and works for your members are extremely important factors.

Here are some other things to consider:

1) When you invest in a WCMS application it may take you many months to configure all the templates, install the application and add in all the content.
2) If you decide to move to another WCMS application, it may require many months of moving over content and rebuilding the design.
3) If you use a free (open source) WCMS application, if you have any problems with it or the application creators decide to stop updating it, you could be stuck hiring a developer to support and maintain it.
4) If you use a paid version of a WCMS system, which does not provide the source code to their application and the company goes out of business, even if the program is installed on your server, it may be almost impossible to support if issues arise.

Overall of course the best solution is to build your own WCMS system and hire developers (which are as inexpensive as possible, and you hope will stay with you for years.)

Most of us, however, will not be able to afford any custom solution, and will have to opt to purchase an already pre-made product.

Remember, unless you have the budget, you need to focus on getting your site built in the fastest and least expensive method you can so that you can focus all your money (and time) on marketing.

A simple leased WCMS application in most cases works great.

Build your site – Get your Membership base – Then worry about building anything custom.

Customers come because you have something unique to offer – NOT because you have spent three months getting just the right logo color.

Built it and stay the course, if something does not work change it and move on. That's the road to success in this business.

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