Hybrid, Agile & Modular Web Content Management

How open source, open standards & the Cloud can enable a modular solution, speed up time to market & improve digital marketing agility.

It’s certainly no secret that the marketing and communications departments are taking more and more control over the management of Web content. And, as they do, it’s also no secret that the amounts of Web content in the organization, along with the tools producing it, have increased like never before. The explosiveness of social and mobile content alone has more than doubled the number of properties that the average marketing organization is now producing.
Additionally – as corporate web properties have multiplied, so too has the need for targeted, personalized and contextually relevant content. And, finally, all of this is combined with the explosive growth of tablet devices such as the iPad, Android and Windows tablets and evermore intelligent smartphones. In short, the marketing department is increasingly looking like a publishing and media company.

But in looking like a publisher – the marketing strategy can no longer be simply about publishing “content” out in some static way. Whether it’s web sites, mobile content, wikis, blogs, RSS feeds, social media or any type of enterprise collaboration, the critical factor is that the content is personalized, relevant – and most of all: contextual. In fact Gartner has said that by 2012, the typical Global 2000 company will be managing between 2 and 10 relationships with contextual content providers.

And, in January of this year, we released our Context Aware Content Marketing paper. In that paper, we discussed the various readiness stages for organizations to become “context aware” in their marketing strategy. This paper also urges the need for the marketing department to become more agile and flexible – in order to become ready for the “Real-Time Awareness” stage of delivering context-aware content through multiple channels.

The challenge with moving fast, of course, is that Web Content Management systems are typically large, unwieldy and difficult to replace. And, when they are actually replaced by the enterprise – it is normally a painful, long and disruptive company-wide process.

“Enterprises are now embracing new delivery models. Now, enterprices in many industries are more open to an off-premises or hybrid option for their WCM solution”

Gartner, Magic Quadrant Report 2011

However, new approaches for Web content management have been proving very successful in enabling this agility without the associated disruption. Some organizations that are looking to deploy more agile, flexible and/or portable marketing solutions have begun to look at Hybrid Modular WCMS solutions for managing some or most of their Web Content. As Gartner said in their Magic Quadrant paper back in November of 2011 – enterprises that took a wait and see approach to the prospect of ‘ripping and replacing’ their existing WCMS systems are now “embracing new delivery models. Now, enterprises in many industries are more open to an off-premises or hybrid option for their WCM solution.”

This whitepaper will first define the hybrid, modular solution of WCM – and then provide a set of three best-practices of the types of hybrid solution that are optimal for marketing projects.

Today’s Enterprise WCM - too big to fail

Many of the most prominent enterprise Web content management systems have matured to meet many of the more sophisticated requirements of delivering dynamic content for marketing. Terms like Web Engagement Management, and Customer Experience Management are popular among both content marketing practitioners and CMS vendors.

WCM software solutions are increasingly differentiating themselves on a scale of how well their solution can help a customer DELIVER a personalized “web experience” to the client’s consumers through multiple channels such as web, mobile and social.

The value presented by WEM/CXM is that this process is, at its heart, about managing the audience’s experience in such a way that they ultimately do what the marketer wants them to do. In short — software vendors are going down the same road they went down before. The business case for WCM being made by many vendors today isn’t making it “easier to manage Web content.” Rather – it’s about making it “easier to manage experiences”.

However, in order to do this, enterprise Web Content Management vendors have taken one of two approaches. They have acquired smaller point solutions and “bolted” them onto the WCM in order to enable these features; or they have continually added and added “modules” into the core system – creating an enormous piece of software that inherently handles “everything.”

Either approach creates a challenge for the agile approaches now required from the marketing team. Once these giant solutions are running in an organization – the level of effort required to change them becomes quite daunting.

Any project (for example adding a mobile site) that risks creating a failure in the system at large becomes such a large endeavor that it may outweigh the business case of the project to start with.

Hybrid & Modular - a new approach to marketing and Web content

Despite whether the enterprise Web content management system is successful in making it easier for the marketing team to publish content to the Web, the truth remains that most enterprise WCM systems are NOT accomplishing the WEM/CXM strategy because they are too bulky and unwieldy. This has become a prime driver of replacing the enterprise WCM system with something that the marketer usually describes as “easier to use”. However, in reality – the real business goal is to simply accomplish the WEM goal with greater speed and ease.

As Gartner pointed out in its last Magic Quadrant report, there is now a growing movement to offer a different approach than “ripping and replacing”. Instead of replacing the entire WCMS - which can be time consuming, and very painful, many organizations are looking at a hybrid solution. In this way an enterprise can change out part of their content platform, or only certain content platforms with a new WEM/CXM strategy – and leave the rest of the site intact. This provides the marketing group with the flexibility and power they need – without removing some of the governance, integrations or other powerful business requirements that the enterprise may not want to upset at this point.

The key with a Hybrid, modular web content management solution is that it must integrate seamlessly into existing Web channels – and manage the content in such a way that it can integrate with other CMS systems so that any efficiencies of scale are not lost. In short – any hybrid solution benefits will be completely lost if all the enterprise winds up doing is simply adding yet another web content management solution to the mix.
Rather, with an enterprise hybrid and modular web content management solution – the enterprise first identifies which content (or sites) will be in need of management in this fashion. Secondly, and just as importantly, the enterprise identifies where the challenge will be solved. It might be just the display side (in order to deliver personalized, contextualized or otherwise dynamic content) to help deliver a better experience. Or, it might be the management and storage side (in order to pull content from disparate sources into a unified and more normalized structure). Or, it may be both – but only specific to a specific product site, or mobile or social strategy.

This is the Hybrid, Modular Web Content Management solution.

Example
The marketing team at an enterprise consumer products company wanted to add contextual and targeted display content to their online commerce store, their new mobile app and social channels (e.g. e-commerce site, their mobile web site and Facebook). However, in order to do that with their existing enterprise Web Content Management system, they know they will face a year-long project, and a complete re-tooling of templates, workflow and other business logic within the system.

Using a Hybrid, Modular solution the Enterprise achieved this in weeks. The key is to continue to manage the content in their existing system as they currently do. All existing web content managers will continue to use the existing WCMS to manage the content.

After the content for these channels is developed in the existing WCMS, the output of this content is published to the new CMS as normal. The new Hybrid, Modular solution will feed that content into a medium neutralized format into the content repository. Then, the hybrid solution is deployed only on the display side into the E-Commerce app, the Mobile Channels and the Facebook Channel – giving them all the features of the dynamic app display without disrupting the management side at all.

With this in place – the company now manages (and keeps the same governance model) over the content as before. However, because the Hybrid Modular solution is displaying and measuring the content across the multiple channels – the marketing group gets the benefit of new features such as dynamic contextual relevance, personalization, and the usage metrics that come from that.

• Suddenly, their Facebook page is displaying content relevant to the personas they have developed.

• Their mobile site is taking device, location and personal preferences into account as it displays content

• Their ecommerce app is using the product tagging structure from the ecommerce application to show relevant and personalized content.

In short – they have gotten tremendous value out of a new WCM solution – without having to rip and replace their old solution out. After they determine whether the new, targeted and dynamic displays are providing business value – they can decide when, where and how to replace their existing system.

Best practises to
Hybrid & Modular

Today it’s very easy to “over-purchase” web content management technology. Given the feature wars – especially among proprietary closed-source vendors – today’s digital content platforms can be oversaturated with features that already exist within other solutions already present in the Marketing department. This can make Web communications extremely expensive.
From Web sites to intranets, product catalogs, landing pages, mobile devices, global campaign microsites and all of them in different languages – the key is that your content is simply everywhere, all the time. To get a handle on all of your Web content communications – you must deploy tools that decrease the time and complexity for managing a unified communications strategy.

However, as stated before, simply replacing an existing WCMS with any other new WCMS that has more features is not the answer. No, in order to make the best business sense, a Hybrid Modular solution should be architected to be especially suitable for these types of projects. These architectures include:

- **Data and Content Centric versus page oriented**
  This means that the content is storied in a normalized and standards-based way that can be retrieved by any type of system.

- **Be able to draw content out of different content stores and application**
  For example, SOLR is a powerful Search application that can accommodate faceted search, dynamic clustering and database integration. It can tap into a number of databases and even unstructured documents like Word and PDF and return normalized data.

- **Open Standards**
  Open standards (like JCR and interfaces (like a REST API) increases the interoperability to increase the speed of integration into other systems.

- **Cloud & Hosted Architectures**
  A quality hybrid, modular solution may also be most appropriate to deliver from a cloud based architecture. One of the key benefits is that a team doesn’t have to wait. With something like Hippo Cloud, for example, an enterprise architecture team can quickly deploy a solution for marketing – and test out the platform for business results. There is no need to worry about scaling – as the cloud platform enables the ability to scale to enterprise requirements without the need to purchase extra hardware. Then, if and when the requirements call for pulling that infrastructure back into the enterprise – the team can do so. Unlike other Cloud Solutions which are architected to ALWAYS be in the cloud. The Hybrid solution can be built in the cloud to be tested – but then brought into the enterprise to accommodate security or other requirements.

  This is an incredibly powerful business case for speed and efficiency and empowers the organization to generate business results even faster.

- **A Content-Centric Modular Solution**
  (The Separation of Concerns). Perhaps most importantly – a solution that is appropriate for the Hybrid Modular solution should be one where the component pieces of the display architecture, the management architecture and other components can be elegantly used. It makes no sense to deploy a display only strategy for part of your web site if the system you must use requires the enterprise to use the management module.

  The best Hybrid Modular solutions (again like Hippo CMS) have a complete separation of concerns between the management and display architectures. The content repository can be deployed entirely separately from the content display application and templates – which can all be separated from the management interfaces. It is this type of architecture that gives the enterprise to deploy a Hybrid, Modular solution across any number of aspects of the Web Content Management Challenge.

**Case example of Hybrid & Modular**

Enterprises can utilize these Hybrid Modular content services to deliver content on-demand to customers, partners, employees or really any audience that needs to consume the content in a way that the current WCMS doesn’t effectively provide. By enabling only pieces of their Web site to be delivered in this fashion – or by utilizing services such as Hippo’s Context Aware Content Server as a content display mechanism with other CMS’s and application providing the content – context as a service the enterprise doesn’t have to completely throw out existing tools and processes to become more agile.
Rather, the enterprise can ensure interoperability with their existing CMS – but delivery on the promise of contextually relevant content at whatever level makes sense for their business. For example, Hippo has been working with a large software company on just such a project.

**Case Study**
Enterprise Software Company. With a multi-billion dollar market cap and more than 6,000 employees, this company is a leader in its field across three different product categories. Their Customers are other companies across a number of industries.

**Challenge**
As a leader in the field, the company decided to launch an App-store to allow their customers to purchase more software through the entire ecosystem of their existing applications. In short – they wanted to manage upsell and relevant content for their App Store in a separate application – and display it on a web site – as well as within their own application. Their existing CMS would not handle this dynamic display, but was already the contender for managing the content.

The company was not only looking for better performance from their online app store – including faster response times, and higher conversion rates – but better management of their catalog content. Additionally, they required sophisticated globalization support for the many countries they support. And finally, they were looking for optimized delivery of content as a Web service - including context aware search and browse – which would deliver the most relevant content to their consumers.

**Solution**
This challenge was the perfect use for Hippo’s hybrid type of solution. After an extensive review of a number of enterprise Web content management products – the company chose Hippo CMS. The main reasons Hippo stood out were its modular architecture, the full featured and extensible administration console – and the fact that Hippo is designed for multi-channel publishing.

**Result**
The new Hippo CMS provides this enterprise with a number of benefits that work toward meeting their business requirements.

- The new system has increased the speed and responsiveness across all their web channels – including all of their mobile channels.
- Better performance, and increased availability of content is also increasing conversion rates
- The company now has the unprecedented ability to add, change, test and target new content – and the platform is now a much more powerful commerce platform.

An enterprise with the size and scale of this software company realized the true benefits of an Open Source, hybrid and modular solution – architected for the enterprise. They have launched a platform that is capable of meeting the dynamic and unique needs of their enterprise requirements. Hippo’s commercial open-source model gives the company the best of both worlds: the quality of service and security of professional support and the flexibility and freedom of open-source.

**Conclusion**
CMO’s have a huge challenge these days. They have to continually adapt to the changes in content channels - while improve productivity and cutting costs. And, as marketing teams continually want to open up the business, the technology team is challenged with trying to lock it down. As the CMO wants to go faster and faster to streamline the content conversation, the CIO is working to make sure the business is protected from risk.

A Hybrid and Modular solution can be a bridge to a new future – or simply an effective way to handle a point solution. It enables marketers to get the more dynamic, open and effective ways of managing multi-channel content – without disturbing the governance models employed by the CIO.
And, by providing a singular content repository, accessed using an open standards-based API, the content can be locked down and can be ensured to be much more error free. But, simultaneously it can open it up to much more flexible and nimble ways of applying new interfaces to it.

At Hippo, we are constantly focused on not only how to create better experiences for audiences – but how to create better experiences for authors and editors as well. We know that customers now expect to be able to engage with a company at EVERY stage in their buying process. And, by making it easier and more contextually relevant on both sides – a modular WCMS can much easier to facilitate the conversation.

About Hippo

At Hippo, we believe, digital is here to make our lives a little bit better.

Hippo sets the standard for how organizations can bring real-time relevance to their audience and is the foundation for personalized communication across all channels: mobile, social and web. Our purpose is to facilitate innovation so our customers can create digital miracles. We serve our customers, by creating a platform that is fun to use, easy to implement and open for innovation.

Hippo CMS is a powerful, enterprise-class foundation to deliver outstanding Customer Experiences based on Enterprise Agility and Innovation Power.

Hippo CMS is open source, 100% Java and convinces with its lean product architecture that is built for uptime, security and performance.

Our dedicated, Certified Partner Network delivers Hippo Awesomeness around the globe to our valued customers. Hippo is proud to serve organizations such as Disney, British Telecom, Dolce & Gabbana, Max Bahr, the Dutch Police, Thomson Reuters and Crédit Agricole.

Hippo is headquartered in Amsterdam, The Netherlands and Boston, USA.

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