



ROAD BLOCKS to **CMS** adoption

By Paula Toth and Gina Gotsill

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IN TODAY'S CONTENT-DRIVEN MARKETPLACE, organizations have discovered they must serve two masters when creating their content. First, there are corporate drivers that demand reducing cost while increasing quality, usability, AND reusability. Second, users demand immediate answers and content that is accurate and personalized to their needs. These trends have led to an increase in Content Management System (CMS) adoption and a movement to treat content as a corporate asset.

At TechProse, we have treated content as a corporate asset for years. We have found other organizations also embraced this concept and are actively using a CMS. Others are on their way, but many more are not sure what their first step should be, or how to make a compelling business case to upper management. Some clients have tried and failed to adopt a CMS, while a handful of others are in denial about the need to modernize and streamline their processes.

IN JANUARY 2011, as our Best Practices Leader and “Single Sorceress” Paula Toth prepared for her presentation at DITA North America, TechProse created a survey to learn more about why organizations resist CMS adoption. What are the obstacles? And, for the organizations that are using a CMS, what are the benefits? This report summarizes our findings and provides insight into the reasons why some organizations are using CMSs – and why some aren't.

THE SURVEY

On January 24, 2011, TechProse launched an email blast that contained a link to our survey, CMS Adoption Obstacles, to several hundred people in our network. We also used social media to expand the survey's reach and asked several CMS business and thought leaders to post the link to their blogs. By the time we took the survey down in mid-February, we had received 100 responses.

WHO RESPONDED?

Nearly half of our respondents were content developers and another 20 percent were a mix of software developers, marketing writers, information architects, and managers. We also received responses from a few editors and librarians. Nearly 80 percent of respondents create technical documentation; the rest create training materials, support and marketing materials, and website content. Nearly 70 percent of respondents do not use a CMS to develop content.

CMS ADOPTION HAS A LONG WAY TO GO

WHILE TECHPROSE and other organizations know the value of using a CMS, it's easy to see that many organizations are still on the fence. Just 29 percent of respondents work for organizations that have implemented a CMS solution. Organizations find there are multiple obstacles to adopting a CMS. Highest on the list is cost. Respondents also revealed that employees have expressed resistance to any mechanism that provides version control. Others said their organizations are too small to reap the benefits of a CMS. "We are handling fewer than 50,000 pages," one respondent said.

Indeed, CMSs have plenty of skeptics. "I haven't researched any CMS software so I don't know the cost but I'm sure there's a decent upfront cost for the software," one respondent said. "More importantly, I think the man hours we would have to put in to get the CMS up and running is significant."

Others took the "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" approach. "What we are currently doing is so easy; takes almost no time," a respondent wrote. "Adding another layer would add time, not save time."

OTHER OBSTACLES to CMS adoption included the inability to get funding to pay for large initial license fees and implementation costs. Other organizations lack a champion who will build a business case to make such an investment, or they can't demonstrate the return on investment.

Organizational culture is another formidable obstacle to CMS adoption. "Focus/culture is on sales," one respondent wrote, "not the details of workflow or employee productivity." And, some organizations are siloed; worse, they separate documents and won't work together to share content. One respondent reported that most of the writers on the team don't see a problem with how work is currently being done and they're against a proposal to move to a CMS.

CMS ALTERNATIVES

NEARLY 50 PERCENT of technical communicators not using a CMS have implemented version control systems and 54 percent use the file system of their computer's operating system to store content. While these methods provide storage and can



BY THE NUMBERS

A TechProse CMS Obstacles Survey (100 respondents)

69%

Don't use a CMS

49%

Use version control

54%

Use file/folder organization

71%

Use manual workflow

Percentage that don't adopt a CMS because...

54%

It's too expensive

38%

IT can't support it

28%

No one will champion it

26%

Configuration takes time

13%

It's cumbersome to use

be used to address version control, they do not help authors find reusable content, nor do they make content easy to find.

To find a file, 33 percent of those not using a CMS use the file search capabilities of the computer's operating system. We suspect that this process is not full-proof and requires multiple searches to locate documents in folders on various servers. Nearly 71 percent of respondents also said they use manual processes to manage workflow, such as emailing files and updating status as a part of project management. Nearly 30 percent use spreadsheets and 10 percent use Microsoft Project and similar tools to track document work flow. Few, if any of these options help authors find reusable content.

BENEFITS OF USING A CMS?

CMSS HAVE LONG BEEN LINKED to content reuse, which can drastically reduce content development costs. The majority of respondents, 69 percent, said they work faster and more efficiently with a CMS. Others reported they have shortened their time to market, lowered the cost of developing content, and greatly streamlined the translation process.

Respondents report they can be more responsive to their user communities when errors are found in existing documents, "We are able to make corrections and updates to already-published content."

ONE RESPONDENT used this formula to express the increased business value of the content: easy to use search and navigation = finding content = more reuse = more consistency. And another stated a CMS, "would make it easier for people to search for content that's already available and can be reused, if needed."

We asked respondents if they thought their team could work faster or more efficiently if they had a CMS, or if they could shorten their time to market and reduce the content development costs. Nearly 67 percent of respondents said yes – all of the above. They complained of siloed departments, redundancies across document families, and inefficient authoring, workflow, and review processes. Teams also need a lesson in collaboration.

Respondents also noted a CMS could alleviate issues created when people work on local machines and then copy files to the server that overwrite content that was previously updated by other writers.

Another respondent's comments highlighted one of the greatest benefits of a CMS solution. "Source material is created and stored in at least four different tools by seven writers," the respondent wrote. "I think that says it all."

NOT ALL RESPONDENTS who have implemented a CMS are singing its praises. A few commented that while they had implemented a CMS, they had not yet seen the benefits from the solution. In our experience, organizations must do more than simply implement a CMS to achieve cost savings and efficiencies. They must adjust the architecture of their content to get maximum content reuse, as well as optimize their processes and workflows to gain efficiencies. Putting thought into making these adjustments pays off when you reap the benefits mentioned above.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

PAULA TOTH

Paula is the TechProse team's in-house subject matter expert on DITA and single-source solutions.

With nearly 20 years of experience in technical communications, she is passionate about helping organizations streamline



and reuse their content. She has worked with TechProse since 1990 and has managed single sourcing projects for small firms and large corporations. For the last nine years, her focus has been single-source analysis, development, and information architecture.

In addition to her work with these solutions, Paula has years of experience in information design, instructional design, content development, help system development, marketing writing, and process and procedure development.

GINA GOTSILL

A journalist at heart, Gina Gotsill has written about a wide range of business topics,

including training boot camps and teaching finance to non-finance professionals. In 2010, she co-authored *Surviving the*



Baby Boomer Exodus: Capturing Knowledge for Gen X and Y Employees (Cengage) with TechProse co-worker Ken Ball.

WHAT'S OUT THERE?

Organizations that choose to implement a CMS solution will find a wide range of options. Survey respondents reported using solutions such as Astoria, AuthorIt, SDL Trisoft, DITA Exchange, DocZone for DITA, Microsoft SharePoint, and Vasont.

THE OBSTACLE of CMS cost can be directly addressed by opting for a SaaS solution if your content lends itself to being externally hosted. Astoria, SDL Trisoft, and Vasont are tried and true standards who have both traditional CMS and fully hosted SaaS offerings. Componize has a traditional CMS and is capable of offering it as SaaS solution if you ask about it. DITA Exchange is based on SharePoint and has a fully hosted SaaS solution available. DocZone and EasyDITA are contemporary companies who went straight for SaaS solutions right from the start. If you need to keep your data behind your own firewall and are cost conscious, Easy DITA and SiberSafe offer deployed SaaS CMS solutions and Suite Solutions' X:Point offers a low-cost Microsoft SharePoint solution.

SUMMARY

In summary, we learned that technical communicators are creating a wide range of content, from technical documentation to web content to training, support and marketing materials. Even though there are many CMS options to choose from, only 29 percent of respondents work for an organization that has implemented a CMS. Technical communicators who use a CMS report that they work more efficiently and have shortened their time to market. They have lowered the cost of developing and maintaining content by employing content reuse, and enjoy the benefits of quickly making corrections and updates to already-published content.

IF YOU ARE LIKE 67 PERCENT the survey respondents who think that a CMS can reduce development costs and increase work efficiency, there is no reason let the obstacles to CMS adoption stop you. If you can make a sound business case for cost savings and efficiencies, an affordable CMS solution might well be within reach.

If you'd like help to make your business case or if you want to know more about implementing a CMS to achieve content development cost savings, contact Paula Toth, Best Practices Lead and "Single Sorceress" at TechProse: paula@techprose.com.