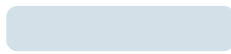




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# How to choose the right CMS



SilverStripe's definitive guide to selecting a CMS that works for your organisation



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As a fundamental part of your organisation's digital strategy, choosing which content management system (CMS) you should use for your websites and applications can be intimidating. There are so many different steps to consider. What do you want to achieve by using a CMS? Which teams should be involved in the decision-making process? How much does setting up a CMS actually cost? Is a CMS even the right choice for your organisation's business objectives?

Choosing the right CMS for your organisation doesn't have to be a difficult process. Many of the issues that arise when selecting a new CMS can come from having a lack of scope for the solution, lacking the proper understanding of CMS issues, or including too many requirements that the CMS must have.

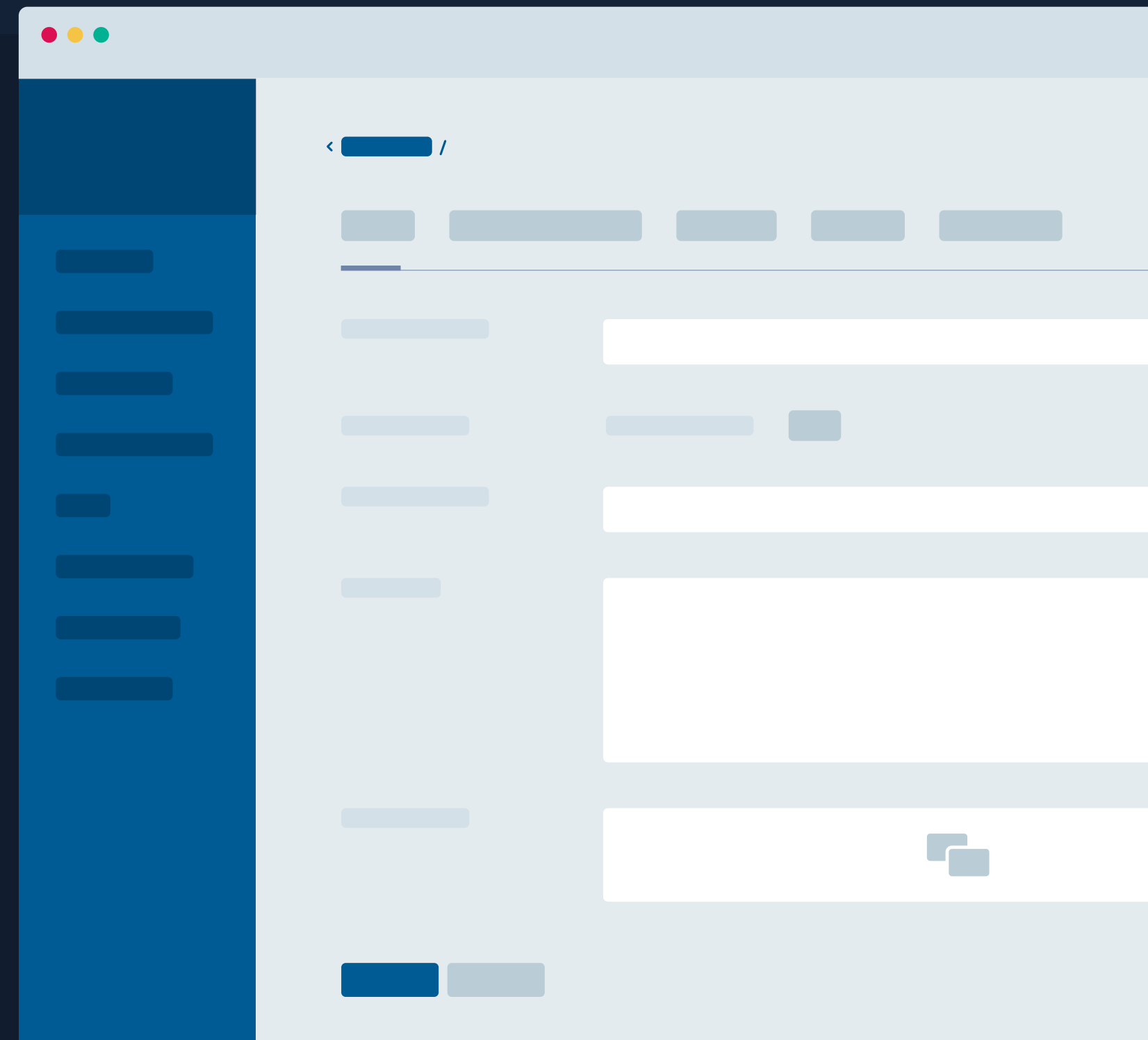
In this guide, we explore how you can evaluate CMS solutions to choose one that is right for your organisation. We will walk you through how to approach working with other teams in your organisation during your evaluation process to gather and filter diverse opinions and requirements about what you need.

Throughout this process, you will also gain an extensive understanding of the issues you can solve for your teams and your organisation by taking the time to select the right CMS.

### So what does this process include?

- Who is involved in choosing your CMS?
- What features and capabilities your CMS needs?
- How you can implement your CMS?
- Is a CMS really the right choice for your organisation?

While you are reading this guide, keep in mind how you would answer each of these sections with your teams. The different steps will help give you an idea of which CMS solution is the right choice.



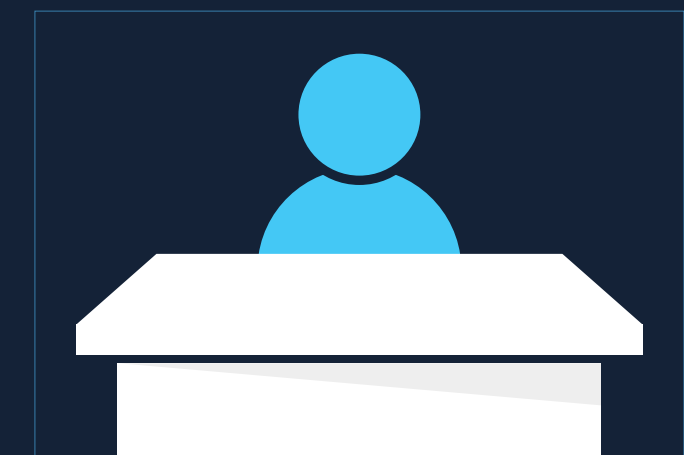
# Who is involved

## Primary stakeholders

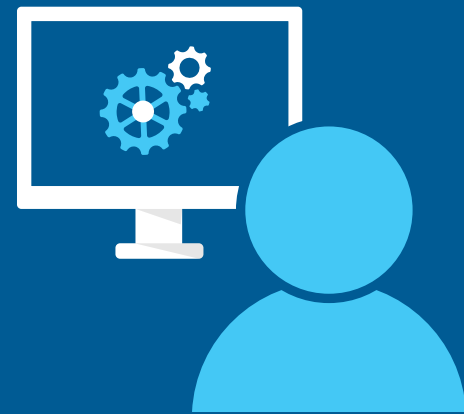
When you start considering a new CMS, the first decision you need to make has nothing to do with its features. In fact, it's all about choosing who is actually going to be involved. Which people in your organisation will be the primary stakeholders of your CMS?

This may not be as easy as it seems. Depending on the size and needs of your organisation, the number of people involved will vary. It could include your marketing managers, professionals in IT, members of your product team, or even your sales people. These people will be responsible for figuring out which CMS will bring your organisation the most value, whether it is for your developers or your marketing teams and how they can work with the CMS.

Different departments have different expectations of what a CMS needs and how a new CMS fits in with your website (or digital strategy).



Typically, the departments that are involved in the decision-making process are:



### IT

Generally speaking, your IT department will be responsible for implementing, maintaining, and modifying your CMS. You don't want to increase their workload by selecting a CMS that is difficult to work with. Your IT teams will know which software will work, and how best to integrate it with existing systems. They may already have some CMS expertise and will also have a good knowledge base of existing CMS vendors. Their involvement is vital for the success of your CMS deployment.



### Marketing

For content-focused organisations, a CMS is an essential tool. Your content strategy dictates how content drives your organisation—this strategy can support the criteria for your CMS decision. It is also important for marketing to have a stake in the decision-making process, to ensure that the new CMS has features that suit the needs of the team.

## What they want to achieve

With a number of different people involved in the process, there will be even more objectives that will impact the CMS you will select. You need to make sure that you understand the extent of the objectives these teams want the CMS to meet.

### These objectives could include:

- Executing campaigns that are consistent, and drive favourable business outcomes
- High quality lead generation that results in profitable, repeat business
- Delivering outstanding customer experiences

## Processes in place

With software such as a CMS, marketers are beginning to drive the purchasing decisions. By selecting teams that will work well together when making the decision, the process of how to choose becomes much simpler. You can now decide how to research, evaluate, and select your ideal CMS.

Setting up your research and evaluation process means you are less likely to pick the wrong CMS. You don't want to go through this process, only to find out that your CMS solution doesn't suit your organisational needs!



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What they want to achieve

## Research + resources

Each organisation will have ways they like to conduct their research. Your teams will need to select which way works best for them!

As a stepping stone to begin your research journey, these are some helpful solutions:

### Going straight to the source

As the main source of research, a CMS vendor's website will provide you with the most accurate product information. You'll be able to see customer success stories, major case studies, gated content, etc. These should showcase the vendor's expertise. You are also able to directly contact the vendor should you need any extra information.

### The experts of analysis

Firms such as Forrester and Gartner are constantly researching and reviewing digital platforms such as CMSs. Based on important attributes, their reports act as a benchmark for what the industry says a CMS should have. It will allow you to better align your business goals and team skills with your CMS choice.

Industry experts also write extensively about their knowledge on CMS. They cover different use cases on CMS, highlighting the best characteristics over a variety of vendor offerings.

### The community

The expansive nature of the internet means there are a number of online publications and review sites. Information on these sites will need to be sifted through, as it won't all be about products that are suitable to your needs. It's also important to keep in mind that the quality of the information is dependant on the expertise of the writer, which will vary. Generally, it is good to use these forums when you want to see how the end user values the product.



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What they want to achieve

## Internal resources

Implementing, maintaining, and using a CMS means you will need teams with a range of skills to help you. You may find a CMS that aligns with your business needs, but it is not compatible with what your team is capable of.

### For your technical teams, you'll want to consider:



Security expertise



Existing infrastructure



Maintenance



Ease of development

### For your marketing teams, you'll want to consider:



Authorship experience



Previous CMS experience



User-experience

## Features + capabilities:

What do your requirements look like?

Once you have selected your stakeholders, you can begin to look at the requirements your CMS will need. These requirements will look different across your different teams, so you will need to ask them to rank each one to make up their ideal CMS.

A common way to rank your requirements is through using the MoSCoW prioritisation method. This helps create understanding amongst your stakeholders on the level of importance that they will be placing on each requirement.



**MoSCoW** requires your stakeholders to list their requirements in terms of:

### **Must-have**

These are the most critical and time-sensitive requirements for the project that can halt progress if not addressed.

### **Should-have**

These are not as time-critical as must-have requirements, or there is another way to satisfy them, so they won't block the delivery of the project.

### **Could-have**

These are desirable and could improve user or customer experience, but are not necessary for the project. These are typically included if the resources are available.

### **Won't-have**

These are the least-critical items with little return on investment, or aren't appropriate for the scope of the delivery for this iteration of the project. These can either be dropped or reconsidered in the future.

It could look something like this:

	Must-have	Should-have	Could-have	Won't-have
Marketing {	Easy-to-use Integrate with other tools Search friendly	WYSIWYG Content management User permissions	File & asset management Versioning Multilingual	RSS feeds Training CMS analytics
IT {	Stable Scalable Secure	High performing Modular Active development	Support Documentation Granular approach	Different architecture options Template engine Object relational mapping

While each department has their different priorities, common themes tend to emerge. These could be considered your MVP for whichever CMS you choose. You should find these features revolve around:

- How easy the CMS is to install and use
- How scalable, flexible, and adaptable the CMS is
- How secure the CMS is
- How much documentation and support is available from the vendor

## Capabilities for teams

To connect with your ideal customer, you want your CMS to be able to enhance your communication methods. By integrating with a stack of best-of-breed applications, you're increasing the capability of your CMS for your digital marketing teams.

**Having a suite of tools integrated with your CMS means your teams can:**

- Make your communications and interactions responsive
- Automate your marketing processes
- Nurture your leads
- Use email marketing
- Tailor your marketing efforts through personalisation
- Use sites and apps for mobile marketing
- Use A/B testing to measure your success



## How the right CMS supports your efforts

Your CMS should also integrate with your social media sites. As customers are now active participants, there is a higher need for tools that support omnichannel efforts. You want your customers' digital experience to be consistent and feel personal. Having a versatile CMS within your digital experience stack will deliver on those expectations across multiple channels.

For your CMS to be effective, it needs to support collaboration amongst your teams. Workflow management in your CMS enables your organisation to set user permissions and page content workflows for high quality web content. This is essential for your content-related activities.

## Your future needs

As your organisation's needs evolve, you want to make sure that your website can evolve with it. To be prepared for any future needs you might have for your site, keep in mind:

- New features and applications being developed
- Upgrades
- Upkeep and maintenance
- Scalable
- Supported
- Safeguarding your users' privacy

These changes do come along with an extra cost, so it is better to consider them in your approach now to avoid any surprises in the future!

# How you will implement

## Choosing a CMS that scales

Change has become an essential requirement for organisations when it comes to choosing their technology. As your organisation grows in size, your teams will change, and your business objectives will evolve with them.

You need to select a CMS that can scale with you so your teams can deliver at every step of a project. Your CMS should encourage the collaborative creation of solutions, and deliver your content across channels and campaigns through an iterative process. An Agile CMS will be flexible in adapting to evolving business requirements, allowing for fast implementation and effective information transference across your organisation.

It's not just about the CMS either—the vendor should be able to scale with you too. Consider the following when looking at the different CMS vendors:

- How well does the vendor continuously improve their solution?
- Is there a record of healthy growth in their organisation?
- Are you choosing a product that has a planned, well-mapped future?
- Is the vendor's CMS truly Agile in terms of its flexibility and adaptability?

## Your hosting options

For your ideal CMS, you need to consider your different hosting options. Each option has its different features and complexities that need to be addressed. Here are just a few of the different options, grouped by size, complexity, and cost.

Managed virtual	Virtual	Managed dedicated	Dedicated	Shared
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More expensive than virtual services but cheaper than managed dedicated services (mid-range)</li> <li>• Increased level of support</li> <li>• Increased level of service interconnectivity</li> <li>• Responds to changes quickly</li> <li>• Integrates seamlessly with complex services</li> <li>• Rent infrastructure that matches the demand of your application and scales effortlessly and seamlessly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cheaper hosting than managed virtual</li> <li>• Your team is responsible for upgrading and maintaining</li> <li>• Emulated servers running on a few real servers</li> <li>• Require detailed knowledge about provider's systems</li> <li>• Require complex applications to be able to scale in times of high demand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most of the characteristics of dedicated</li> <li>• Operating system is strictly controlled on these kinds of servers</li> <li>• Providers can install server management software OR providers can restrict PHP features</li> <li>• Best for a skilled staff as it requires more staff involvement for installing software and maintaining server</li> <li>• Performs as well as dedicated hardware that is unmanaged</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expensive</li> <li>• Own/rent a server in a data center</li> <li>• Can install anything you want on the server</li> <li>• All resources are available to you to run applications/services</li> <li>• Locked into a single vendor</li> <li>• Less control as server staff need to help you</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cheaper alternative</li> <li>• Partition a server to allow multiple domains to use</li> <li>• Multiple clients host on a single server</li> <li>• Clients are able to make changes only from an admin interface, but reduces providers in simple support tasks</li> <li>• Slowest and most restrictive hosting</li> </ul>

## Cost vs value

How much your CMS will cost you depends on a wide variety of factors. The possibilities are endless, but there are costs that can seem like they appear out of nowhere.

The first round of costs can come from either of the following:

- Getting a complete scope of work that comes with a fixed price; or
- Having a scope of work determined that has an initial price, which is subject to change later

But what makes up the cost of these prices?

It can come from any of the following factors:

- Value demand
- Operational costs
- Failure demand
- Avoidable costs

However, most organisations are surprised when excess costs appear later in the process. Beyond the initial licence cost, costs for your CMS can also come from:

- Customisation
- Updates
- Hosting and management
- Re-platforming
- Software subscription or ongoing licenses
- Support

These factors do not take into account the time and resources that are used to set up and maintain a CMS.



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## How you will implement

When the proper care isn't taken to choose your CMS, the cost can be more than the price you've paid to set the CMS up. A CMS that isn't right for your organisation could end up negatively impacting your business objectives. Remember: your CMS is one of the most essential parts for interacting with your customers. The wrong CMS can take value away from your content-related activities, making it harder for your marketing teams to create valuable interactions with your customers.

Once your CMS is set-up and running, you should actively be determining what value your CMS is bringing to your organisation. This can be done through running content optimisation experiments (e.g. A/B testing) that help to quantify what effective user journeys look like, and therefore the value your website is providing to your customers. From this point, you can make changes if the website isn't meeting your organisation's objectives.



## Is a CMS really the right choice?



### Benefits

You can manage all of your digital marketing activities efficiently and effectively from one source

You can use a variety of technologies that can be integrated seamlessly to suit your digital marketing needs

You can get all the benefits of an easy-to-use, fully capable, secure CMS with essentials features, even without integrations



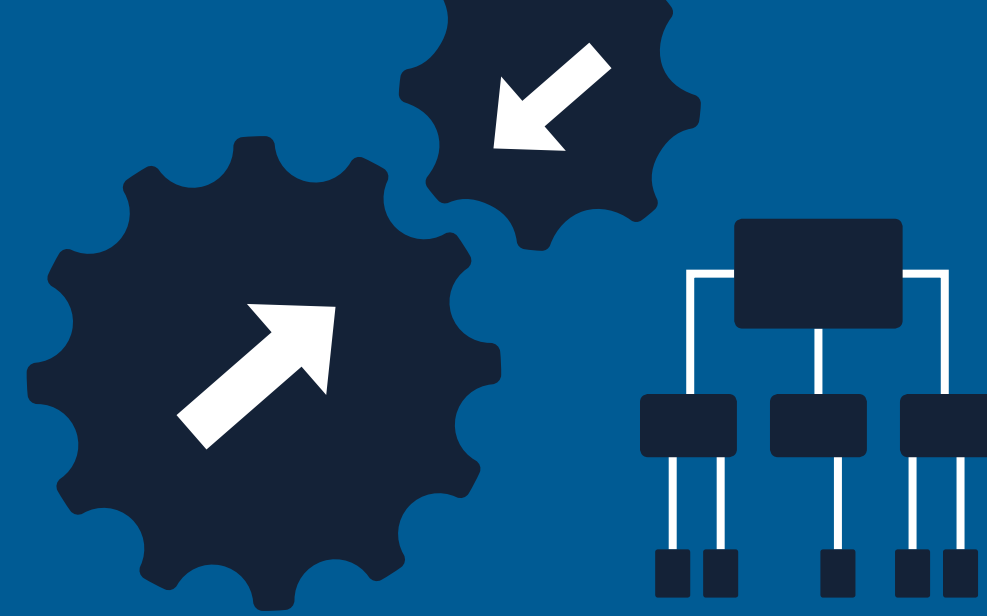
### Concerns

Can you trust one platform to scale as the needs of your organisation evolve?

Can one platform truly manage the current needs of your organisation?

Is taking a best-of-breed approach what's best for your organisation considering the different vendors you will need to work with?

Is a CMS the right choice?



## Integration is a must

Despite any concerns you might have about working with multiple vendors, integration is essential for implementing your digital marketing strategies effectively. Any CMS you choose should have the capabilities to integrate with different applications.

Your sales team may need to integrate a CRM with your CMS to be able to get high quality information for lead funneling. Alternatively, your marketing team may require analytics on customer behaviours on your site as a form of testing the success of your new CMS.

## Which architecture works best?

Traditional CMS tools can lack flexibility, and can present challenges when trying to include additional functionalities to your site. The CMS you choose should empower emerging technologies, such as Headless and Decoupled, alongside traditional website builds.

Headless and Decoupled CMSs provide greater opportunities for teams, with greater vendor flexibility and content reach. Content is not locked into the frontend, fundamentally changing how your organisation and your marketers engage with audiences.

When you choose a CMS that is built for the future, you are able to use best-of-breed tools to create your own digital experience stack that works for you and your organisation. It enables you to extend the features and capabilities of your site, offering your team a greater user experience.

# Before you start

## Understand your CMS problems

Using a CMS isn't just about bringing new technology to your organisation. The right CMS is invaluable to your objectives and requirements, so it is important not to forget what is at the heart of this new venture.

You don't want just any CMS that works—you want a CMS that works for you. That's why it is important to fully understand how a CMS will fix certain organisational and strategic problems for your teams. How well do your teams understand the issues they're having that a CMS could help provide a solution to?

If you already use a CMS, is it performing in the way your teams need it to for producing the required results? If it does, do you really need to consider a change? Or is there another solution that would help you meet the needs of your organisation?

Alternatively, if you don't use a CMS, what problems are you trying to address that made you consider looking for a CMS? Do you feel a CMS will provide enough value to justify any costs? Will your organisation be able to grow and develop with the CMS you choose?



# SilverStripe is here for you!

Are you in the process of evaluating your CMS solution options? Do you want to deliver an outstanding digital experience to your users? Contact our team at SilverStripe to see if SilverStripe is the right CMS for your organisation and your customers.



**SilverStripe**

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