

What is a CMS, and do you need it?

A Content Management System (CMS) sounds complicated; it isn't. Basically, if you want to update your content on your own without [programming homework](#), you are asking for a CMS. There are many out there—some simpler than others, but they basically take the technical side out of managing a website. Instead of going through a webmaster, you can use your own web browser and “log in” to your site, make changes to the text and images on pages, post news, and so forth. If it suits your project, a CMS can be a great solution and can make managing your website simple and convenient.

Not every project requires a CMS, but here are some ways to identify if it does:

1. You plan on posting frequent updates
2. You want to run a blog
3. You want the ability to change the content on your own
4. You plan on greatly expanding the content of your site

For sites that need a blog, I use the same platform to power the blog that I would for the rest of the site. It is a very small additional cost to integrate the CMS into the rest of the site if you already need a blog.

However, if you have a small business and just want to list your services (which rarely change), directions, contact information, and a short bio, you may not need a CMS. Content that will stay the same doesn't usually require a content management system. Small changes can usually be sent to myself or your website designer with little hassle. This solution is cheaper, but is less flexible in the long run. If you decide later to add a number of pages and expand your site, it may end

up being more expensive at that point than if you had purchased a CMS in the first place.

The moral of the story is: build your website with the end in mind. If you are sure that your content isn't going to change and you want to keep your budget low, skip the CMS.

If you plan on making frequent updates, including news, events, or want to control your content directly, go ahead and get the CMS. It will be an asset in the long run.