

Considering how many content management system (CMS) products there are, and how rapidly they are changing, it is important for consumers selecting a solution to make an *informed* decision.

The first step is to gain an understanding of the CMS marketplace, and where the various products fit in. This briefing outlines a few of the practical ways of doing this.

### **Browse the products on the market**

A good starting point is to browse through the full range of CMS products available. This is likely to be a large number, and be aware that each geographical region has its own unique mix of products, many of which are produced locally.

If you are located in Australia, we maintain a list of all products present in the local market:  
[www.steptwo.com.au/cm/vendors/australian](http://www.steptwo.com.au/cm/vendors/australian)

Otherwise, we've linked to all the other CMS lists maintained world-wide:  
[www.steptwo.com.au/cm/vendors/list](http://www.steptwo.com.au/cm/vendors/list)

### **Investigate content management issues**

Product capabilities vary greatly, and there is currently little consensus about what comprises a "content management system". In this environment, purchasers need to have an even greater understanding of how CMS products work, and their strengths and weaknesses.

There is also much more to a content management project than installing software, and the most important activities relate to people, process and content issues.

The most readily available sources of information on CMS issues are articles published online. Good sites include:

[www.cmswatch.com](http://www.cmswatch.com)

[www.cmsreview.com](http://www.cmsreview.com)

[www.steptwo.com.au/papers](http://www.steptwo.com.au/papers)

### **Lurk on the mailing list**

There is one key mailing list for content management systems. The majority of the knowledgeable people in the market are on this list, and by watching the discussions you can learn much.

Even better, this is an excellent forum in which to post questions on specific issues or topics.

You can find the list at:

[www.cms-list.org](http://www.cms-list.org)

### **Obtain a report**

Beyond the resources published by the major research firms, there are three commercial reports specifically focused on selecting a CMS:

[www.cmswatch.com/TheCMSReport](http://www.cmswatch.com/TheCMSReport)

[www.metatorial.com/planner.asp](http://www.metatorial.com/planner.asp)

[www.steptwo.com.au/products/toolkit](http://www.steptwo.com.au/products/toolkit)

These are complementary reports which address different aspects of selecting a CMS product.

### **Make use of the CMS Evaluation Lab**

The University of Washington has established a CMS Evaluation Lab, with the specific goal of building a knowledgebase about CMS products and issues. For more on this visit:

[connection.ischool.washington.edu/cmslab/](http://connection.ischool.washington.edu/cmslab/)

### **Seek the advice of a vendor-neutral expert**

There are a small number of vendor-neutral consultancies world-wide that specialise in content management, including ours.

Any of these consultants can advise you on the key issues, and help you to select the right product.

### **Learn from the experiences of others**

This is the most valuable and most effective approach of all, particularly for public-sector organisations.

Many other organisations have already selected and implemented content management systems, and by learning from their experiences you can better guide your project.

The key thing is to look beyond just what product they chose, as they will have a different needs and requirements to your organisation. Instead, you are best served by focusing on the techniques and approaches they used, and how effective these were.