In many projects, the plan is to deploy a new content management system (CMS) across the whole organisation.

In these organisation-wide deployments, an assumption is made that a "big" CMS will be needed to meet the "enterprise" needs.

In practice, a better rule is that the more users that will be accessing the CMS, the simpler (and more usable) the system should be.

This briefing will explore the challenges involved in large-scale CMS deployments, and present the case for purchasing a less complex CMS in these situations.

Delivering to the whole organisation

Due to the effort involved in selecting a CMS, there is commonly a desire to deploy a single CMS solution across the whole organisation.

This may also be driven by the desire to move to a more decentralised authoring model, where each business area is given the responsibility for maintaining their own content. (See the earlier article *Centralised or decentralised authoring?* for more on these authoring models.)

The demand for a single CMS may also arise from the desire for an enterprise-wide technical platform and architecture.

Note that while this could be called an "enterprise" deployment, this can be easily confused with "enterprise content management" (ECM) products (which aim to integrate content, document and records management). Unless there is a desire to address more than web content, the monicker "enterprise" should be avoided.

Challenges multiply

As the number of authors using the system grows, so do the challenges involved in implementing, deploying and supporting the product. These challenges include:

- Larger number of authors to train and support, many of whom will not have technical or web knowledge.

- Many authors will be infrequent users of the system, updating only specific content.

- More difficult to gain adoption of the CMS.

- Much greater requirement for change management and internal communication.

- More content to be managed and migrated into the CMS.

Option 1: customising the CMS

The option usually taken when a "big" content management system is purchased is to customise the system to match the needs of the organisation.

In this approach, the authoring and site management interfaces are tailored, either for the organisation as a whole, or for individual business units.

While this is a viable approach, sufficient time, resources and money need to be set aside when the project is planned.

The project team will need to have in-depth CMS knowledge, in order to avoid common pitfalls and problems. The team will also have to have strong user-centred design skills, to ensure that the custom-developed interfaces are easy to use. This includes the ability to create paper prototypes and conduct usability tests.

(See the earlier article *The importance of CMS usability* for more on this.)

Option 2: simpler CMS

Instead of relying on customisation, the usability of the CMS should be evaluated as a key selection criteria for the new system.

The solution should provide usable authoring and site management interfaces "out of the box", as well as being designed to be easily deployed to many users.

It should also be recognised that in a broad implementation, the content and change management activities will consume most of the first year or two.

For these reasons, a simpler CMS may prove to be the most effective way of ensuring adoption of the CMS, and therefore success of the whole project. Once the value of this solution has been delivered, it can be extended (or replaced) to tackle more complex requirements.