A better approach: requirements-focused CMS selection

Your organisation is unique, and as such, has a unique set of content management system (CMS) requirements.

There is also no single "perfect for everyone" content management system. Each product has its own set of strengths and weaknesses, and distinctive design principles.

Unfortunately, the selection process followed by many organisations doesn't recognise this, leading to the purchase of a CMS which does not match business needs.

Selecting a CMS does not have to be a lottery. By following a *requirements-focused* methodology, instead of a *features-driven* approach, the right CMS can be identified, and the business risks minimised.

Features-driven selection

Historically, a CIO looking to purchase a content management system starts by obtaining one of the reports produced by the large market analysis firms.

These reports review a selection of the "major CMS products" against an arbitrary set of requirements. A score is produced for each category (eg. workflow, publishing, ease of use, etc), as well as an overall score out of ten.

Reading through these reports, the CIO simply picks the product with the highest score, and purchases that.

We call this *features-driven selection*, as it involves purchasing the CMS with the most "ticks", in the hope that it will work well for the organisation.

There are a number of serious problems with this approach:

- Most organisations have half a dozen key business requirements that must be met. If the top-scoring product has 100 features, but not these six, it will fail.

- The products in these reports are assessed against a single *arbitrary* set of requirements. There is no way of assessing how closely these requirements match those of your organisation.

- Only a small number of CMS products are reviewed in each report, which often does not include locally-developed options.

- By the very nature of these reports, they typically focus only on the big end of town, and the very capable, but very expensive CMS options.

- You may end up spending money on a pile of features you don't actually need.

Requirements-focused selection

In comparison, *requirements-focused selection* starts by identifying the specific business requirements for a CMS that exist within your organisation.

This involves consulting all stakeholders, reviewing existing systems, and aligning with business strategy.

The result is a comprehensive set of requirements, driven by business needs (not technology issues). Amongst these, your key requirements are clearly identified, along with the "nice to haves".

With these requirements in hand, you can then evaluate products against them, to determine the most suitable CMS option.

In this way, the product that most closely matches your organisation's unique requirements can be selected.

It also resolves the difficulty of comparing very different products against each other. Using this approach, each product is assessed against your business requirements alone.

Meeting your needs

Every organisation has unique needs, and every CMS product a unique set of features and design principles.

This means that somewhere out in the marketplace, there is a product that closely matches the specific needs of your organisation.

Only by identifying the specific business requirements does it become possible to meaningfully compare the many products on the market, and to find the best match.