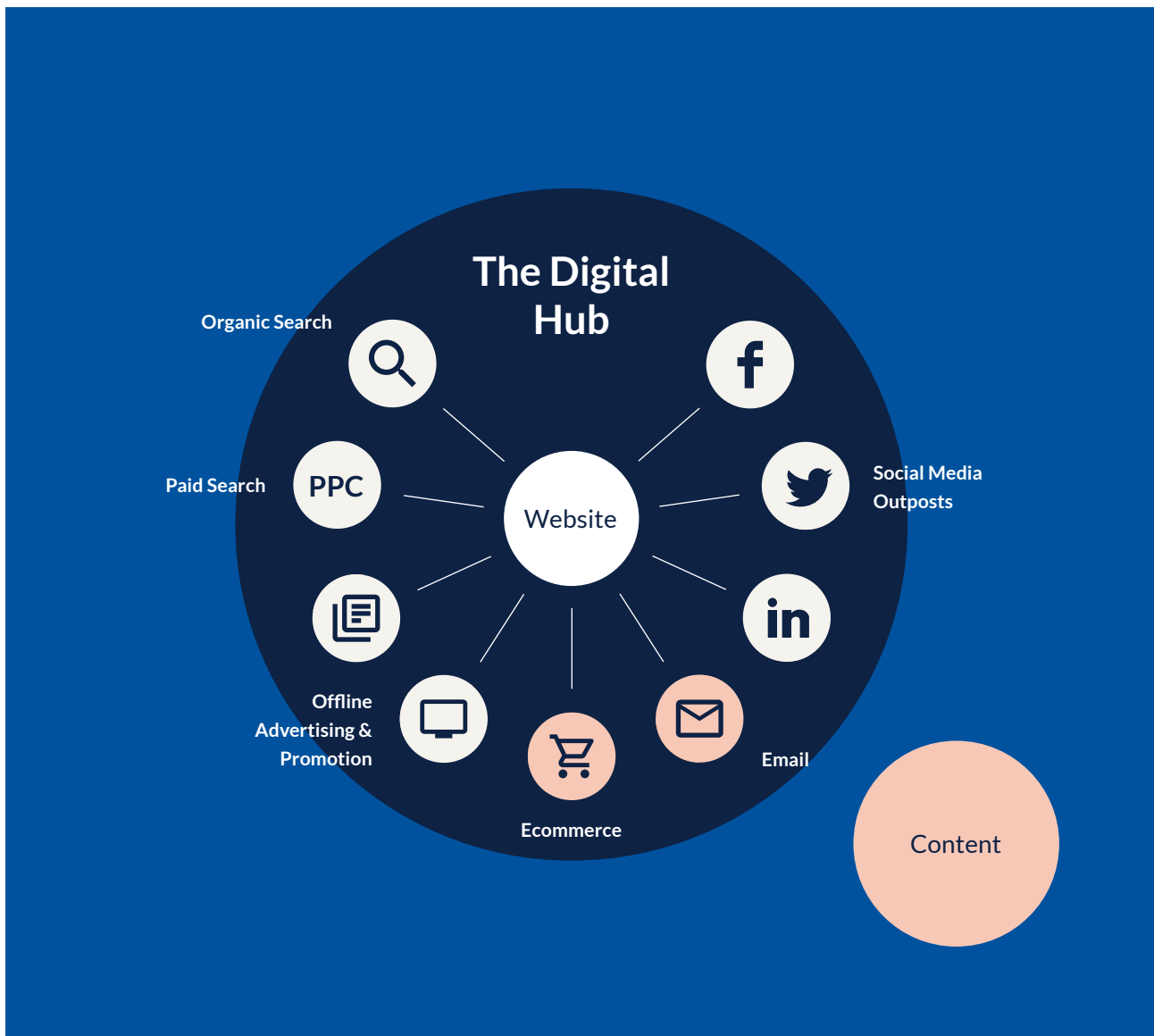# How to choose the right CMS?

Selecting the right CMS
can be a difficult process
unless you know what to look for

With thirteen years of digital marketing experience, **Jessica Rowe, owner of Meta Consults**, knew exactly what she was looking for and in this whitepaper you can follow her through her selection process, and be inspired to put together your own selection criteria.

The ever growing need for simplicity

Back when I started there was a lot of hard coding and not a lot of that CMSstuff. It was still pre-mobile, pre-complexity. However today, mobile is of the essence. Because of that there's an increasing need for simplicity not only from a **user experience standpoint**, but also from the **content management standpoint**, which is: how do you manage the content you're delivering on your website? Both have to be easy to deal with.

The Digital Hub

Organic Search

Paid Search

PPC

Website

Offline Advertising & Promotion

Ecommerce

Email

Social Media Outposts

Content

Where to start?

The key thing is creating a solid digital hub with your website at the core. What goes around the core are social media outposts, email, e-commerce, offline advertising and promotion, paid search, organic search etc. You better have a strong foundation for your hub, because everything you do connects to that core — that website and its content.

"Content is king. One of the most important steps in the digital strategy plan is: how do you drive people to that content? That implies the right people to the right content at the right time. If your digital hub isn't set up to be able to do that, you cannot do your job."

Jessica Rowe, Owner, Meta Consults

Here we come to a point where we start searching for the toolbox in order to get that great website and guide people to check out our content. Naturally, we need a great CMS to make their experience smooth.

At the crossroads. You got two options

The main problem with many CMSs today is that they have exceptionally high price tags, lack of flexibility, or too much development intervention post-launch. How to select a proper one?

Here's how it goes. You have two options:

• Select an agency and let them steer the CMS selection process.
• Weigh and select the CMS yourself and then choose a partner (agency).

My last experience with the first option was a trainwreck. The clients had an expensive CMS, but they didn't know what they were doing. They had no control over the project. They overestimated their abilities in implementing the tool and because of that they didn't have enough resources. It took us a lot of time to do it right. It created a lot of re-work.

I went the second way. Things with option number two are not always easy of course as it requires a lot of legwork and research. Some organizations may spend months selecting a CMS, however it doesn't have to be this way.

It is all about assessing what really matters for you as an organization, what your have-to-haves and want-to-haves are. Let me tell you about the process me and my team went through.

The CMS selection process

We developed **10 categories of needs and wants**, defined them and weighed them in terms of importance to use as a **scorecard** (see below) during the evaluation process.

These categories allowed us to determine what a CMS had to have and what we wanted it to have. And then based on these things — what's most important, what's least important. Also, you don't want to leave things open for personal interpretation. For example, what are we talking about when we say it has to be secure? So we defined what each of the categories meant exactly.

Then we chose CMSs to evaluate. The majority of what we've evaluated was either .NET (the background of most of our developers) based CMSs or the ones that everybody had heard of. We ended up evaluating **WordPress, Drupal, Sitecore** and **Umbraco**.

Where we were able, we installed the CMS and played around with it, sort of like in a sandbox. If not able to install, we were using literature as a base.

Because of the site we were building at the time, the features you see in the scorecard are finance-specific. For example, we were especially focusing on security. However, overall the features are broadly applicable or at least serve as a good resource.

Additionally, features like flexibility, ability to reuse widgets or have different levels of access, keeping people from breaking things — these are key elements for a CMS project in any field. And these also are features that stood out for us in Umbraco. In the end this CMS got the most points as you can see. But did it actually prove its worth while working on real projects? Let's see the results from two projects we've done with Umbraco.

	Weight	Wordpress Score	Wordpress Total	Umbraco Score	Umbraco Total	Drupal Score	Drupal Total	SiteCore Score	SiteCore Total
Site Usability	9	10	90	10	90	8	72	9	81
Responsive									
Easy to navigate									
Searchable									
Modern looking									
Security	10	3	30	9	90	4	40	9	90
Can the site ne secure									
The CMS is prone to data concerns									
Administration	9	8	72	9	81	8	72	9	81
Are there admin roles for access levels									
Can the right people access the right information									
Authoring	8	8	64	9	72	4	32	8	64
Content is edited easily									
Templates are easy to use									
Pages are easy cloned									
It has WYSIWYG & code views									
It has page versioning									
"Speedbumps" can be easily added									
Digital Asset Management	7	8	56	8	56	6	42	9	63
Images & files are easy to upload/add									
Videos are easy to implement on site									
Banners & widgets are easy to place									
SEO	8	7	56	9	72	8	64	9	72
The template structures is SEO friendly									
URL structure is SEO friendly									
Editor canaccess page Meta data									
Site speed does not inhabit rank									
Site is optimal on any device									
Analytics	6	7	42	9	54	5	30	10	60
CMS has baseline performance analytics									
Other analytics can be used									
Development	8	9	72	9	72	6	48	9	72
CMS is easy to develop in									
CMS can be used without developer intervention									
Developers are easy to find for native language									
Form Management	8	8	64	9	72	5	40	8	64
Forms are templated									
Forms can beplaced easily									
Forms can track campaign data (UTM tags)									
Forms can track page level data									
Cost	9	9	81	9	81	6	54	2	18
CMS is reasonably priced to achieve BBMC goals									
Cost to develop in CMS is affortable									
Cost to do initial configrations is reasonable									
Weighed Totals			622		740		489		665

Two Umbraco success stories

North American Savings Bank and their website NASB.com

- Six months post redesign, NASB.com organic site traffic was up 22,7 percent overall.

- KEY conversion page traffic was up nearly 400 percent (373 for mortgage, 379 deposit services):
    - Page views were up 211 percent (to 2.3 m),
    - Pages-per-visit was up 154 percent,
    - Bounce rate was down 97 percent,
    - Before Umbraco — NASB organic leads were less than 100 per month with less than 8 loans.

- Website generates more than 50 closed loans each month and the number is still growing.

- Through implementation of upgraded flows (streamlining process) we brought deposit services to their knees with one campaign to drive new accounts. Prior to this, they had a few hundred accounts opened online in the 3 plus years of offering the older "clunky" version. In two months, we drove 939 new accounts opened online.

BBMC Mortgage and their website mybbmc.com

- Mobile bounce rate is down 75 percent.
- Successful sweepstakes — 38,000 plus leads in two months.
- In the first month after the launch alone, 1,072 keywords improved in rank. That includes being indexed for 342 keywords they've never ranked for before.
- Flexibility of Umbraco and some creativity has enabled us to save a recurring 15,000 dollars/month and upgrade capabilities.
- Before — the month just prior to the website redesign: 0 of the top 10 organic search landing pages on mybbmc.com were related to VA loans. After — in the last 30 days: 4 pages in top 10 organic result landing pages are now related to VA loans.
- After years of BBMC's relative flat organic traffic, there has been a steady up-tick since the launch of their new site.

The results for both projects were faster than I expected. You can foresee things like better functionality, but for example the SEO results were surprising — we reached the set goals a lot faster (6 to 12 months faster) than what we were anticipating in both instances.

And the uptick is still on. The cool part for me is that you could say that we "caught a lightning in a bottle" that is to say that maybe we got lucky with NASB.com and the results were fantastic. But then we did it again: mybbmc.com was flat, flat, flat and then boom — off the charts.
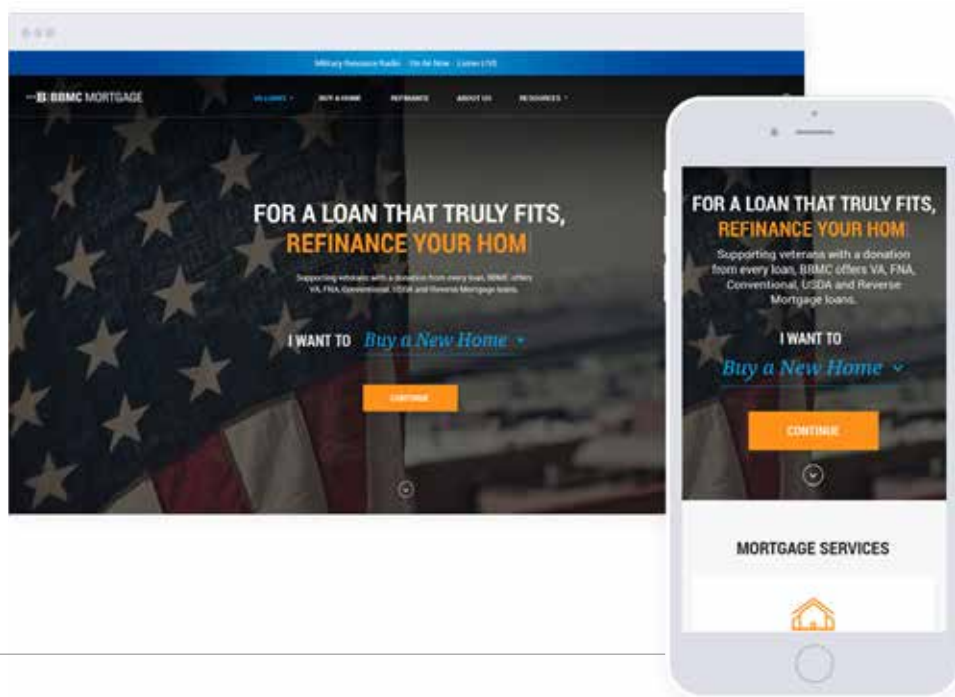
Bottom line

If you stayed with me on this journey, you probably already know the conclusion: **your digital project should start with a CMS selection process.** Do a thorough evaluation based on your needs, do not assume for a second that the most expensive CMS is probably the best.

There's a lot of perception from some, that if a CMS costs a lot of money, it must be better. I've worked with Sitecore before. We spent a 100 thousand dollars on a licensing fee to buy their CMS and around a million dollars designing the website.

However, the CMS was never implemented correctly, it never worked the way it was intended. I am sure that there are Sitecore implementations that work beautifully, but at the end of the day for us it was a complete overkill to what we were trying to accomplish.

With Umbraco it's always like: "Wow, what do you mean it doesn't cost?" It allows us the ultimate flexibility: what tools we want to put into, how we want to function and look and feel, and how we want to manage it. For me as a marketing person it was beautiful — a huge win.

"Creating a solid digital hub should start with a CMS selection process. Do a thorough evaluation based on your needs, do not assume for a second that the most expensive CMS is probably the best."

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Bottom line