



Proprietary VS Open Source CMS

All of the content management systems currently on the market can generally be categorized into two groups: **proprietary** and **open source**.

Figuring out which one works best for you will depend on your CMS needs.

This document will help you decide between the two by:

- Defining both open source and proprietary
- Differentiating between the two types of platforms
- Outlining the pros and cons of each platform
- Detailing how Agility CMS fits into the CMS landscape



What is Proprietary?

Proprietary content management systems are built and maintained by one company.

These companies typically do not grant access to their source code, but they do usually provide an open framework (API) that can be extended by others.

Proprietary platforms can be hosted by the company that created them, or by a third-party company. It is common for proprietary platforms to require a license/subscription fee. These fees are often built into hosting charges. Fees usually include access to the company's support team that is able to fix and address issues as they arise, a big differentiator compared to open source platforms.

Examples of Proprietary platforms: Agility CMS, Ektron

What is Open Source?

Open source content management systems are built and maintained by groups of interested people (independent developers and companies). These platforms are typically governed by a single controlling body, but don't actually belong to anyone.

Since open source platforms make their source code available publically, anyone (with the required skills) can extend the platform's code to create new features and functionality. There are hundreds of independent developers and companies creating add-ons to the most popular open source platforms. There are a lot to choose from to meet your content management needs.

Open source websites can be hosted from just about anywhere, including ISPs, hosting companies, or on your own server.

Examples of open source platforms: Drupal, Joomla!



Let's explore which of these two types of platforms might be the right fit for you and your online properties based on needs, and the advantages/disadvantages of each platform.

Proprietary Content Management Systems

Proprietary May Be Your Best Bet if You:

- Need to focus entirely on your online content and not the technology that supports your website
- Require a platform that is backed by a support team to fix and address any issues that arise (like outages, slowness, etc.)
- Don't have the resources or know-how to deal with updating software, fixing bugs and security issues
- Don't want to choose from a large number of modules/plugin-ins to decide which ones will work best with your site, and instead want to choose from a library of modules that are guaranteed to work with your platform of choice
- Want a solution that can run in the background for several years, but stay up to date

Common Problems Encountered Using a Proprietary Platform:

- Software solutions – and the companies that build them – don't always stick around forever so it is important to choose a content management vendor that has proven staying-power and will continue to invest in its software
- Depending on the CMS, customisations can be expensive, and enhancements to software can be limited
- Lower-end proprietary platforms haven't kept up with industry changes like Google's search algorithm updates and social networking
- Since proprietary platforms don't make their source code accessible, some CMS's can be difficult to integrate with – it's important to find out whether a vendor can meet your integration needs



Open Source Content Management Systems

Open Source May Be Your Best Bet if You:

- Require a simple solution that is inexpensive (sometimes free) and quick to set up (alternately, more complex websites will take longer to set up and launch)
- Are not bothered with using a basic templated design, which is common for open source solutions
- Possess the technical resources and expertise to create and manage your own website
- Are comfortable deciding which add-ons, enhancements, features and hosting environments are right for you
- Will be able to invest a lot of time enhancing, improving and making changes to your website and CMS to keep the platform and all widgets working properly
- Are able to maintain content management software and update it for bugs, security issues and enhancements (generally require PHP)

Common Problems Encountered Using an Open Source Platform:

- While basic templates are fairly inexpensive, they don't look so great; and well designed, unique templates are often quite costly
- If using a template, your design will likely not belong to you and it's also not likely that you will be able to take the design with you when moving to another host or platform
- Software upgrades and support are typically not included, and if not manually maintained by a developer, your site will remain installed on the version it was built on
- Many plugins do not upgrade properly as they are built for specific platform versions
- When it comes to developers, the majority of those using open source solutions are not experienced software developers (while they can customize designs and configure modules, they may not be able to develop custom software or fix bugs; instead, they will need to rely on the platform's surrounding community for these issues)
- If you ever want to move on to work with a new developer, you may run into issues regarding ownership of design, customisations and modules
- There are no development standards for open source platforms, and developers have unique preferences and knowledge about platforms so it's likely that moving on to a new developer will require a rebuild/redesign
- Open source projects also run the risk of the platform's community of developers and users moving on and abandoning the product
- Security is a huge concern when it comes to open source platforms as source code is open and available leaving websites susceptible to hacks



How does Agility CMS stack up?

Agility CMS is a proprietary platform that is:

- A cloud-based SaaS CMS built on the Microsoft platform
- Equipped with a strong standard development framework (ASP.NET MVC support, as well as ASP.NET Webforms support)
- Easily accessible as open APIs make it possible to access all content within the CMS (Rest, OData, RSS)
- Specifically built and optimized for app development
- One multi-tenant solution, all users are on the same version
- Continually and automatically updated with product releases that are built off of customer and partner requests
- Able to seamlessly handle scaling to an unlimited number of web servers
- Unrestrictive in regards to design or integrations
- Backed by a dedicated support team ready and available to solve issues
- Easy-to-use and has an intuitive user-interface for content editors
- Streamlined for moderating user-generated content
- Able to support and adhere to search engine optimization best practices

Agility CMS vs. the Rest

Agility CMS is backed by a network of web development partners that use the platform to build digital solutions for some of North America's biggest brands.

[Dotfusion](#) is a long-time Agility CMS partner that provides strategic digital solutions based off of unique business models, challenges and needs.

Chris Bryce, Dotfusion's Chief Strategy Officer, prefers working with Agility CMS over open source platforms for the following reasons:

Development time

"We can build an Agility CMS-powered website in 75% of the time it takes on Joomla, Drupal, SiteCore and WordPress due to its very clear development environment."

Support

"With Open Source CMS, you have to rely on forums/discussion groups to find answers if something goes wrong or is not understood. With Agility CMS, you just pick up the phone."



Development Resources

“We have adopted many open source projects and have found that the majority of them have been poorly coded because there are no specifications/standards that all developers use. While this is not directly related to the quality of the CMS, it poses a problem when a developer moves on and their replacement does not understand how the site was coded. Agility CMS is based on .NET so we know that when we hire a certified .NET developer, they will have a baseline standard understanding of development methods.”

Widget Quality

“With Open Source, it’s hard to gauge the quality of plug-ins because they are simply reviewed by the community. You also can’t tell whether one widget will break another. Agility CMS’s functional components are all guaranteed to work with the CMS.”

Total Cost of Ownership

“With Open Source, servers need to be configured, managed, maintained, upgraded and they present issues with scalability. Agility CMS is cloud-based and easily scales with very little setup.”

Database

“Open Source systems store content in a database that is called every time a webpage loads. This takes time, taxes the system and can break. Agility CMS pushes content into the CACHE of the hosting server which provides instant rendering and no chance of database issues.”



In Summary

Both open source and proprietary content management platforms have their strengths and weaknesses.

The decision to choose between the two types of platforms depends on your CMS needs.

Open source content management systems are fine for online teams that are looking for a simple and cost-effective digital solution. Alternately, open source platforms can also work for elaborate and complex solutions when backed by the substantial development resources required to maintain the software.

Proprietary platforms, like Agility CMS, are perfect for digital solutions – both big and small – for teams that put great importance on their online properties but are not equipped with the resources to continually upgrade and enhance content management software. Most importantly, proprietary solutions are perfect for teams that require a platform that comes with a readily available support team that is able to fix and address any and all issues. These platforms are typically feature-laden, fully supported systems that require little upkeep from the user-end.

It's important to understand the full scope of what you require from content management software, as moving from one platform to another can be an arduous and expensive task for all involved.

For more info about Agility CMS, [visit our website](#).