

From Content to Context to Engagement

*The Future of
Web Content Management
is Context*

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About This White Paper

This document is intended for senior executives who want to understand the changing nature of web content management.

The web has become mission-critical for business, with websites the most important channel for sales, marketing, and customer support. As websites have evolved, visitor expectations for those sites have also changed. From a web perspective, visitor context is the key to providing experiences that deliver business results.

Web content management must expand their capabilities to align the content a website delivers against the context of its online visitors – why they are visiting any site, how they’re visiting, where they’ve come from, what content they’re consuming and who they are – all factors making up the visitor’s online web persona.

A “content management system” is no longer enough..”

Context shortens sales cycles, produces higher quality leads, and grows revenue. Context increases customer engagement and loyalty.

A “content management system” is no longer enough to successfully attract and retain your audience. Managing content will no longer be enough.

Content + context will drive successful engagement

This document explores Ektron’s vision of the future of web content management, and how successful businesses will use visitor context to deliver relevant content to their online audiences.

Introduction

Web content management is at the most significant inflection point in its 15-year history.

Context will drive content and intelligent customer interactions, delivering Web experiences that will engage site visitors and deliver better business results. According to Gartner, “By 2013, 40 percent of Global 2000 enterprises will have context-aware computing projects focused on the user experience under way.”¹

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For example, in the case of the mobile web browsing experience, the context is that visitors are accessing the website from a mobile device, usually with a specific task in mind. These visitors don’t need – in most cases don’t want – the same Web experience as that presented from a desktop browser. Not only must the website be mobile-friendly (meaning it renders correctly on a wide range of mobile devices), the experience also must fit the purpose of the device. Users tend to be more receptive to immersive experiences while browsing a site from a tablet such as an iPad, while users viewing a site on a smartphone such as an iPhone are generally interested in a more transactional experience. Location also provides context, as modern mobile devices typically include GPS functionality.

Or consider the difference between a visitor looking at the HP home page and their viewing a product page on Amazon. The context is very different, and likely so is the visitor’s intention. A visitor may be on the HP site because he is researching HP products or looking for a job. When a visitor is on Amazon, it is almost certainly because he is thinking about buying something.

The two contexts are different, and the visitor’s experience with the respective sites is – or at least, should be – completely different. Context defines a visitor’s web experience. If a visitor has come to a site through a search, he doesn’t want to click through multiple, slow-loading, hard-to-read pages to find the one piece of information she is looking for. If visitors are on your site to make a purchase, it’s imperative they experience the same level of checkout/shopping cart convenience that they would have in the brick-and-mortar world. If a prospect has arrived on a landing page via an e-mail marketing campaign, Sales and Marketing definitely wants that page to display correctly on any device the prospect is

1 <http://old.gartner.com/it/page.jsp?id=1410313>

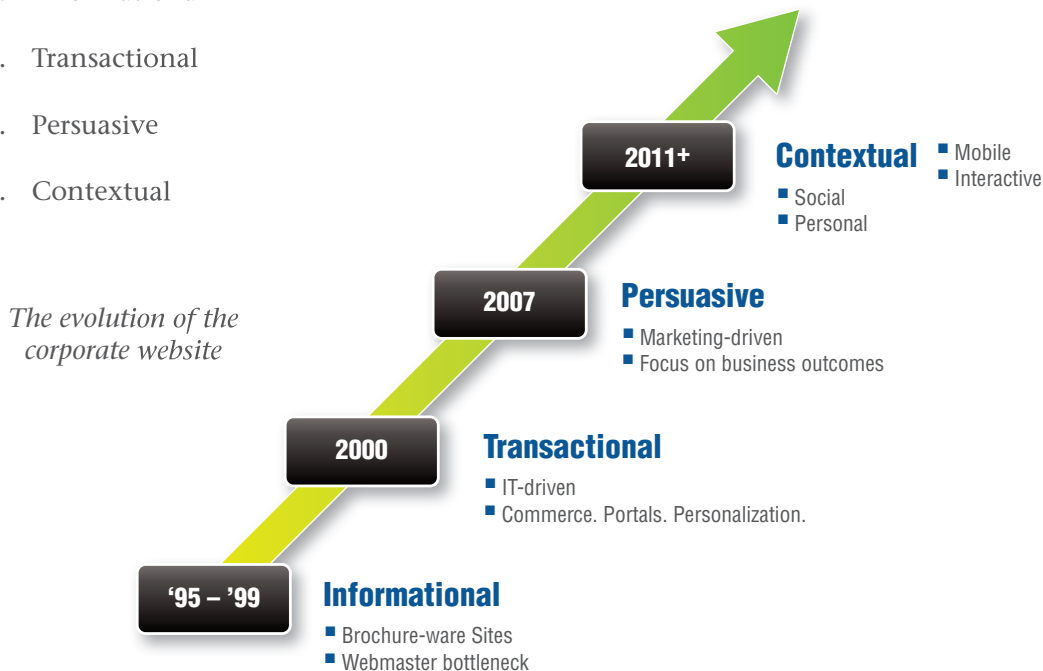
using. “Delighting customers doesn’t build loyalty,” note the authors of a recent Harvard Business Review article. “Reducing their effort—the work they must do to get their problem solved—does.”² Showing an understanding for the customer and respecting the manner they want to do business breeds loyalty.

A Short History of the Corporate Website

The British engineer Sir Tim Berners-Lee invented the World Wide Web in 1989 during his time at CERN. Dr. Berners-Lee pioneered technologies that formed the backbone of the World Wide Web including HTTP, HTML, and the first web browser. The first website was deployed at CERN in 1991, providing technical specifications and guidelines for HTTP, HTML, and hypertext. In those early days, the Web was mostly limited to research and academia. The Web’s full business potential began to be realized with the advent of the graphical browser. In December 1994, a small startup called Netscape Communications released the first version of its Netscape Navigator browser. By its very nature Navigator demonstrated the massive potential of the Web, and as a result drove corporations to quickly start moving their businesses to the Internet.

There have been four inflection points marking the history of the corporate website:

1. Informational
2. Transactional
3. Persuasive
4. Contextual



2 Stop Trying to Delight Your Customers” Dixon, Freeman and Toman, Harvard Business Review July/August 2010.

The evolution of the corporate website

Informational

The advent of the modern browser in 1994 drove companies to invest in first generation corporate websites. These websites were primarily informational in nature as companies rushed to recreate their corporate brochures in HTML format.

This era saw the creation of the so-called “Webmaster” role in IT. The Webmaster was responsible for managing the corporate website and was usually an expert in the languages of the Web such as HTML, HTTP, and CGI. However, since IT departments seldom had the time or budget to devote resources exclusively to publishing Web content, the so-called “Webmaster bottleneck” problem arose, where companies found themselves increasingly incapable of publishing time-critical content to their sites. Requests for content updates of the corporate website could often take days, weeks, or even months to process.

The Birth of Web Content Management

The “Webmaster bottleneck” led to the birth of web content management, a process that allowed non-technical people to more easily create and update content on their websites. In turn, the WCM concept engendered a new type of software – commonly referred to as a content management system or CMS – designed to help companies improve the efficiency of their web publishing. Web publishing pioneer, CNET, was probably the first company to implement a CMS in 1995 with a bootstrapped content management system that foreshadowed a number of today’s CMS core capabilities, such as content reuse and page templates that assembled content dynamically from a relational database.

Early content management systems provided Webmasters with better tools for collaborative web publishing, including check-in/out for file editing, file versioning, audit trails, and workflow. But since the CMS was usually still in the hands of the IT department, the content bottleneck problem remained.

It was clear content management tools needed to become intuitive enough to be placed directly into the hands of the departments who were requesting content updates, such as Marketing, Human Resources, Press Relations and so on. Content management tools began to appear that offered capabilities where a business user could author content and that content was then incorporated into a template to generate a Web page. As these

tools entered into general use, the role of the Webmaster shifted to template and site development while business resources took on direct ownership of their Web content. In this era, investments in Web content management tools were justified by the benefits of operational efficiencies and productivity, reducing overall costs for the business.

Transactional

As the Web became more mission-critical for businesses, enterprises quickly moved beyond basic informational sites. Where the informational era had been characterized by content bottlenecks, the transactional era was defined by integration. Companies began to focus on creating web-based interfaces to existing business applications.

The transactional web era saw the emergence of ecommerce, portals and first-generation personalization. Building transactional applications usually required the enterprise to make significant investments in IT hardware/software and resources. Web content management systems were often loosely integrated into the first wave of transactional applications, but often at the expense of the user experience.

Persuasive

The next evolution of the corporate website occurred as the Web became the primary customer interaction channel. Chief Marketing Officers realized that the Web presented new customer engagement opportunities, and unlike traditional offline marketing channels, Web interactions were relatively easy to measure. In the persuasive era, the monolithic corporate website expanded to include additional engagement points such as landing pages and micro-sites.

The persuasive era saw Web content management tools mature, allowing marketers to create, personalize, test, and analyze the performance of their Web marketing campaigns. Personalization evolved, with more emphasis placed on usability and agility in contrast to the IT-driven personalization initiatives of the past. Website testing emerged as a way of delivering better conversion through experimentation, letting customer data drive website content and design decisions. Web analytics evolved from tracking page views and unique visitors to measuring conversions, funnels, customer segments, and campaigns.

The persuasive era saw Chief Financial Officers justifying their investments in Web content management by measuring productivity gains and revenue generation opportunities. Web content management became a mission-critical business application.

Contextual

The Web has reached its next inflection point – the era of context.

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The Future of Web Content Management is Context

The best performing sites will be those that match content to context, helping visitors achieve their goals with as little friction as possible. Components of the overall web experience including functionality, design elements possible even social elements, all joining together with content to form the experience and resonant with the relevant context.

However, most websites are still treating visitors as nameless entities, providing the same experience to all with little regard of the intentions of their visitors. Today, a business' understanding of context is very narrow – driven primarily by where visitors came from and what they do while on the site. With the rise of social networking and mobile web access, there are unprecedented opportunities for corporate websites to understand, and respond to, visitor context. Tomorrow, behavior, the social graph, location and more will all drive context.

Context, the Future of Web Content Management

Throughout its history, Web content management has played an important role in helping companies align their business strategies to the Web. The core capabilities of content management have evolved to help global enterprises deliver better business results. Today, web content management systems are allowing large global enterprises to publish thousands of daily updates to the Web without relying on IT intervention and manual processes. Enterprises are managing hundreds and sometimes thousands of websites on a single platform, providing significant operational efficiency improvements. Web content management systems are being used to create websites localized for multiple languages with content tailored to meet the unique cultural needs of each country.

It's been said that "content is king." The ability to create high-quality content that attracts, engages, retains, and converts visitors is still an important objective for every website. Content is indeed still the heart and soul of every website. But if content is king, context is its queen; and together they will rule the kingdom of audience engagement and of the corporate website experience.

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Why Context Matters

Context is the key to providing web experiences that deliver business results. Context shortens sales cycles and grows revenue. Context increases customer engagement and loyalty. Gartner describes this new era as Context-Aware Computing, and defines it as "the concept of leveraging information about the end user to improve the quality of the interaction." Gartner goes on to note, "Emerging context-enriched services will use location, presence, social attributes, and other environmental information to anticipate an end user's immediate needs, offering more-sophisticated, situation-aware and usable functions." Software vendors "will begin to integrate multiple contextual components to provide a richer user experience that enables top-line growth as well as workplace efficiencies."

With context, enterprises can focus more in the quality of each customer interaction, rather than quantity. Sales funnels on corporate websites have always been a numbers game; the more leads in, the more hoped-for revenue you get out. The funnel shape represents the substantial number of leads that drop off at each step in the sales process. But customer engagement need not be a numbers game. Running more campaigns or

buying more keywords isn't always the answer. Context lets enterprises do more with each customer interaction, encouraging customer intimacy. Each customer interaction represents a "moment of truth," and with a competitor's website a click or search query away, the imperative to deliver on the promise of context is crucial.

Context in the Physical World

Context is at the core of every human interaction in the physical world. It guides every action we take and every decision we make. Context can be explicit, such as something said or written. It can be subtle, such as with body language. Assessing the context of human interactions is a skill that's learned early in our development. In the physical world, we use context to shape the interactions we have with family and friends, but context also extends to our interactions with companies and brands. Consider how context shapes these interactions:

The retail salesperson

While shopping for new clothes, the salesperson uses context to guide product recommendations. Context is gleaned from assessing your gender, age, personal style, prior purchases, current demeanor, and more. A good salesperson uses context to move you through the shopping process, learning from interaction to understand the unique needs and desires of each potential customer.

The auto dealership

Context drives each step in the automobile purchasing process. When a dealer sees a prospect drive onto the lot, they gain an immediate understanding of the prospect's context by evaluating their current car. Is it new or old? Sporty or practical? Economy or luxury? During the ongoing sales process, interaction and body language allow the dealer to gauge a prospect's interest in various styles and price ranges.

In the physical world, context guides behaviors and actions. Ignoring context is a path to a poor customer experience, and ultimately to poor business performance.

The Role of Context on the Corporate Website

The corporate website has become the primary channel of interaction between consumers and business, yet many websites ignore the context of the visitor's arrival at their site. Context that is taken for granted in the physical world is often lost on the Web. As an example, consider the process of buying shoes on the Web versus making the same purchase in the physical world. In that world, context comes directly from the customer, "I'd like to try a pair of brown dress shoes," for example. In the brick-and-mortar world customers have little tolerance for interactions that don't understand context and won't

remain for long in a store where the salesperson persists in bringing black shoes, tan slippers, white tennis shoes or red boots as a response to a customer's request for brown dress shoes.

On the Web, context is often ignored even when available, even when a visitor is all but leaping up and down and screaming, "I want this!" Try typing "brown dress shoes" into Google and look closely at the experience that's delivered from various sites. Some sites – those that understand that a Search for "brown dress shoes" should result in brown dress shoes – will display a relevant link and possibly even a special offer on those shoes. However, it's as likely that you'll find one or two sites in the top results that are simply providing generic links to their shoes – black shoes, children shoes, running shoes, sometimes everything but brown dress shoes.

There is no excuse for ignoring context on the Web. Context is just as pervasive and just as available on the Web as it is in the physical world. It comes in as many forms, there to be used by savvy marketers if they only will. There are four primary providers of context on the Web:

1. **Preferences** – Often, site visitors will explicitly provide their interests through completing registration forms and surveys. Preferences are perhaps the strongest indicator of context, as they come directly from the site visitor with no need for interpretation. Corporate websites must respect site visitor preferences, and use them accordingly.
2. **Behavior** – Behavior includes both the actions a visitor takes to arrive at your corporate website, and the actions they take while on the site. Knowing the source of a Web visitor provides great insight into their intent. Organic search traffic is important since search keywords can be a goldmine of contextual information. Similar insights come from understanding the context of affiliate, email, and social media marketing traffic. Traffic source is an important indicator of visitor intent, and should be taken into consideration by the corporate website.

The actions a site visitor takes while on any website is another important source of context. Actions include pages viewed, time spent on a page, conversions, navigation paths, and search queries. Marketers can score visitor interactions, weighting the important actions more heavily. Behavior provides real time insight into the specific needs of the site visitor at the moment, and it's vital that corporate websites process behavior.

3. **Location** – Location is an emerging source of context. While traditional technologies such as GeoIP databases provide location at the City/State/Zip level, the growth of

mobile devices with GPS make hyper-location possible. Corporate websites have access to the specific location of a website visitor and can provide hyper-local content to that visitor. For example, a university could detect that a prospective student is currently on-campus, and offer to arrange a personalized tour. A retailer could offer a limited-time promotion to a site visitor if they are in walking distance of a store. The possibilities are limitless.

Smart marketers are already using location information to provide more personalized Web experiences. For example, an Oklahoma media site – OKBlitz.com which is focused on local sports – is selling advertising aimed directly at visitors' interests in specific local schools or teams. OKBlitz provides targeted advertising wherever online news or discussion of a team appears on the site, extending an advertiser's local sponsorship to the Web.

The growth of mobile devices with GPS and social networks such as Facebook and Foursquare is providing even more opportunities for businesses to provide hyper-local context.

- 4. Social networks and the social graph** – The social graph charts a visitor's interests and relationships – their likes and social interactions – across websites. Corporate websites that connect with social networks have the ability to personalize product recommendations, offers, promotions, and other types of content to site visitors, in the context of their social graph. Social relationships that exist in the physical world can now be brought forward to the corporate website, letting site visitors quickly assess how their friends view products or services on a site.

For example, Amazon.com connected their site to Facebook for social product recommendations. Amazon personalizes product recommendations by matching products on their site to products you've "liked" on Facebook. A user that likes Radiohead on Facebook would be provided with product recommendations related to that band.

The Web Experience, the end result of content aligned with context

According to Gartner, in the past year more than 80 percent of inquires about Web content management have come from companies looking to deliver higher business value from their online presence. Business value certainly comes from being able to manage Web content across all channels. But, the connection of content and context delivers business value to both the top and bottom line. The intersection of content and context is the Web experience, an experience that visitors increasingly expect to be personal, social, and mobile.

Personal

Each interaction with a site visitor should result in a more personal Web experience for that visitor. Corporate websites should process context to connect visitors with the best experience that helps them to complete their goals in visiting the site. When executed correctly, personalization strategies are a win-win for both companies and their visitors.

Social

Web experience can be shaped by a visitor's online profile and social graph. Corporate websites should allow users to instantly provide context through easy-to-use connections to social networks such as Facebook (the Facebook "Like" button is the most obvious example of this).

Once connected to a social profile, the site experience should encourage visitor engagement that allows sharing, commenting and rating of their experience. According to eMarketer, the majority of social media users trust the people they know through social networks³. A corporate website should become more personal, trustworthy and relevant to its visitors by incorporating data from their social graph.

Context is also gained from listening to customer conversations in social networks such as Twitter and Facebook. Listening to authentic customer conversations provides opportunities to adapt a corporate website to address both opportunities and issues.

Mobile

The Web experience must not just be tightly coupled to the web browser but also must be

3 <http://www.emarketer.com/Article.aspx?R=1007863>

available and optimized for every channel, format, and device. Corporate websites must move beyond just being “mobile friendly”, they must consider the context of the mobile device and the user. Tablet devices such as the iPad are often used in a more leisurely setting where site visitors are open to a more emotional web experience. Site visitors on a smartphone, such as an iPhone, are generally looking for a more transactional experience where speed and task completion is more important. In addition to device type, corporate websites must become location-aware, and the context of interactions must be assessed with regards to location.

According to Gartner, “context will be as influential to consumer mobile services and relationships as search is to the Web ”⁴.

4 <http://www.gartner.com/it/page.jsp?id=1190313>

Connecting Content to Context with Ektron



The Ektron platform helps companies and brands connect content to context to provide web experiences that deliver business results.

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Ektron is a web solutions company, providing a platform for web content management, social business software and marketing optimization. We help our customers realize operational efficiency gains, increased revenue, and improved customer loyalty through a combination of software and services.

Ektron's offerings are aligned in response both to today's Web content management challenges and to the next major inflection point businesses will face – the need for a contextual website. The Ektron platform helps companies connect their content to visitor context and provide web experiences that deliver business results. Built on Ektron's core web content management capabilities, we help our customers deliver dynamic web experiences to their audiences, content that is unique and personalized to individual context; defined by who the visitor is, how they are engaging with the website, what pages they are viewing and who they are connected to — both on and off the site.



*Improving
Business Efficiency
through Web Content Management*

Evolution of Web Content Management Technology

The Ektron platform simplifies the process of managing content across websites, intranets and extranets, providing core features such as authoring, site design, page deployment and management, content targeting, in-context analytics, and multivariate testing. With Ektron, an

organization can deploy a web content management solution which can be utilized by managers and creative resources without needing to rely on IT departments to publish and update time-critical content.

Ektron helps organizations maximize return on their IT investment by integrating with and leveraging existing applications and systems. The Ektron solution increases business agility by providing an environment that streamlines business processes. The Ektron platform provides a complete set of tools to optimize and measure a visitor's web experience, in turn enhancing a visitor's relationship with the business.

Optimizing the Web Experience

For example, Ektron's Marketing Optimization Suite empowers marketers to optimize the online experience for customers and prospective customers. The Suite's tools include

- **PageBuilder.** To simplify the process of creating and publishing web pages, micro-sites and marketing campaigns.
- **Content Targeting.** To personalize the web experience by matching content to the context of the visitors' reasons for coming to the site.
- **Multivariate Testing.** To aid in experimentation with layouts, images, copy, call-to-actions and other content to define the best pages that deliver results.
- **In-Context Analytics.** To discover how visitors are using a site and what content is most important to them.
- **Sales Enablement.** To provide a sales team with high-quality, actionable, real-time leads.
- **Search Engine Optimization.** To deliver more site traffic through search engines.

Delivering Unique Web Experiences

Visitors increasingly anticipate that the websites they encounter will deliver experiences that are personalized – with content crafted to their interests; social – where they can utilize their social graph in order to better explore the site; and ubiquitous – where a site’s content is optimized for the device a visitor is using.

Personalized and Social

Ektron helps customers personalize their audiences’ web experiences through understanding and responding to a visitor’s online identity. That might entail delivering content relevant to the visitor’s current location for example, or through displaying promotions based on a visitor’s Facebook social graph.

Online experiences become more meaningful to people when those experiences are layered with contextual content based on online identity, which can be defined as: “who I say I am,” “what I do and say online,” and “who I connect to (and who connects to me).”

- **“Who I say I am”** is the data that visitors provide about themselves such as their location, name, age, occupation, and so on. Visitor information captured by the Ektron platform can include such data as originating domain, GeoIP, marketing campaign ID, and more. Armed with that information, our customers gain a complete understanding of visitor demographics and can optimize content specific to the visitor.
- **“What I do”** is a visitor’s activity and behavior on the sites they visit, including the paths and actions they are taking. Ektron customers gain comprehensive insight in how visitors have responded to specific content, campaigns and pages, allowing marketers to adapt their sites in a continuous cycle of feedback and improvement. Our customer’s website visitors enjoy relevant, content targeted to their reasons for coming to the site and based on knowledge about their behavior.
- **“Who I connect to”** is the visitor’s “social graph” built through participation in Facebook, blogs, Twitter, forums and other online social interactions. Ektron’s social tools are designed to make corporate web sites more relevant to visitors by incorporating the best features of the social web, enhancing a site’s value by providing a experience that emphasizes community, feedback and opinion. With Ektron, site visitors can see what their friends are liking, sharing, and commenting upon, helping our customers personalize content directed to their audience. With a single sign-on using Facebook Connect, visitors can opt to join in the conversation, providing our customers with access to valuable data such as real name, email address, profile picture and list of Facebook friends.

Ubiquitous

To guarantee the best online experience possible, Ektron provides a ubiquitous environment displaying content in the context of both desktop and mobile devices, auto-detecting both platform and browser type visitors are using and displaying content optimized for the device.

Content is easily separated from presentation with Ektron desktop and mobile templates, allowing a website to present the same content easily in multiple formats. Content can be associated with any platform and displayed in different layouts based on that platform. Visitor information captured by Ektron's eMobile Tools gives marketers valuable insight into the thinking of their mobile audience, especially the paths and actions they're taking on the site. With Ektron eMobile Tools, mobile web experiences can be built, customized and enhanced to better align corporate website content with the objectives of their audiences.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Too many corporate websites have little idea about what has brought a visitor to their site, and even less insight into what visitors are doing on their site once they are there. When a website cannot infer context, it cannot provide its audience with relevant content but instead must offer a scattershot of information with the hope that the average visitor will find some of that information useful. When an organization cannot provide its stakeholders with relevant information, it misses the opportunity to fully engage its audience, whether that engagement is a sale or reinforcement of brand identity.

When there is a contextual understanding of the website visitor, why they have come to the site, what device they're using, how the visitor has established his or her online identity, the web experience becomes fundamentally different and improved. The key to providing a corporate website experience that delivers results will be in the ability to create unique, relevant experiences based on an understanding of visitor context and to adapt site content accordingly.

To learn how your organization can take full advantage of the future of web content management, contact your Ektron representative today or visit <http://www.ektron.com>.



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What do you **want**
your **website** to do?