Milestone

MUST-HAVES FOR YOUR SEO-FIRST CMS IN 2022

CONTENT TABLE

THE SEO LANDSCAPE HAS CHANGED. COMPLETELY!

When talking and tackling the SEO or search landscape, the biggest challenge for businesses today is visibility in the highly coveted first few positions on search for a query. With the blatant shift of majority searches being carried out on mobile devices, customers now wish for a quick answer while on the go. To no surprise, 80% of online searches are discovery.


Which means that businesses have no option but to invest time and resources on a building technical infrastructure to boost their SEO and in fact, 64% of marketers actively invest in SEO as part of their marketing strategy. Yet, despite all efforts, over 90% of digital content has NO audience!

THE SEO LANDSCAPE HAS CHANGED. COMPLETELY!

On the other hand, businesses need to stay abreast with the constant tidal movement of the search landscape, or in other words, the evolution of search. Search has moved from keywords to conversations, and contextual search has become the focus.

When Google announced the BERT algorithm in 2019, for the SEO community it was almost revolutionary – a "wait, what?" sort of moment. Switch to the present day and we've got the LAMDA and MUM updates on our hands.
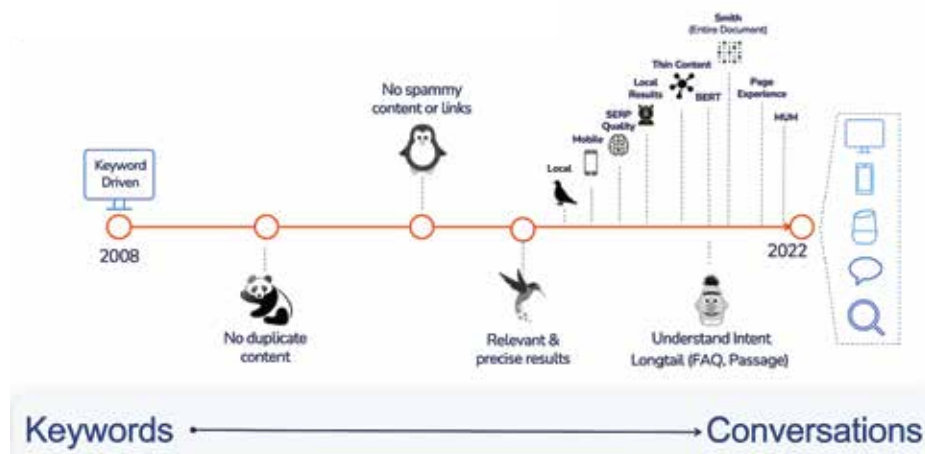
Google have claimed that MUM is 1000 times more powerful than BERT (not just an algorithm but a constellation of algorithms, as well coined) which bridges the language barrier and moves past text to voice, video and diverse media types.

In addition, LAMDA which is trained to pick out patterns in sentences, correlations between words, and going a step further by predicting the next word to come is Google's ticket within horizon to completely understand a query, offer the most relevant answer and suggested topics that users need to be aware of as well.

Keeping these factors in mind, just good content and age-old SEO hacks might not be enough to help you to stand out on search.

What you need is content that is optimized for an omnichannel digital experience that is backed by an SEO-first CMS.

But a question of gold for businesses out there, what does a truly "SEO-first CMS" entail?

WHAT ENTAILS AN SEO-FIRST CMS:

The short answer to this is a CMS that has built-in functionality to optimize your on-page and technical SEO. This basically means that a CMS needs to be founded on the SEO guidelines and has the power to optimize its assets on delivery.

This plays a crucial role when a site is going live and post site migrations. Based on research and experience, it often takes 6-12 months for a website to gain traction on search following SEO optimization.

This downtime results in loss of engagement with customers and the eventual loss of revenue to the business. To negate this potential loss, an SEO-first CMS covers the key SEO aspects a website needs to entail within its infrastructure itself to ensure traction as soon as it is live.

To encapsulate the different aspects an SEO-first CMS needs to take care of, we've narrowed down a business's requirements into these 3 categories - with the goal of visibility to take businesses in front of their customers and reap the rewards in terms of its impact on revenue.

Content Discovery

Self-service Content Management

Analytics & Revenue Drivers

1.

CONTENT DISCOVERY

Here's where we begin to answer the problems that businesses face with regard to visibility on search and staying abreast with the search landscape.

An SEO-first CMS steps ahead of any other CMS in this regard as it is able to address the foundational aspects of a website with its built-in capabilities. Let's begin with the basic SEO functionalities that need to be tied to your CMS:

SEO BASIC FUNCTIONALITIES

Meta Details:

For content, images, and videos, having the meta details such as title, description, alt tags and keywords is standard to give the search engine bot context of the on-page content.

URL Setting:

To understand whether your page is relevant to the content, it starts with the URL name. Having a setting that defines the URL and its slug is essential to improve the relevance of the page. Tip: Keep the URL short and focused.

Page Linking:

Backlinks are important when it comes to improving your site authority. In addition, internal linking basically gives the search engine context of how you are structuring and defining your content across all your pages.

Clearly defined Navigational and Menu Structure:

You'd want website visitors to have a clear idea of how to navigate through your website and having a clearly defined menu and navigational structure is crucial to guide website visitors to their desired page.

Bulk 301 Redirects:

The worst experience is for a website visitor to land on a page that is obsolete or deleted – basically a 404 page. Having 301 redirects will help you drive traffic to the desired page and retain your ranking and your CMS should facilitate bulk redirects of pages that have become obsolete or have been deleted.

SSL Certification:

Consumers will only visit pages that they can trust and having SSL Certification gives them confidence that their data is encrypted and there's isn't a threat of a hack or their personal information stolen.

XML Sitemaps:

These are basically a map for search engine bots to understand the structure and linking of your web pages which helps the bots easily navigate and index your pages.

Meta Robots tags:

Meta robots tag is a tag that tells search engines what to follow and what not to follow. It is a piece of code in the section of your webpage

SEO BASIC FUNCTIONALITIES

Robot.txt:

By having Robot.txt files on your website, you're basically telling the search engine which pages on your website you would like them to crawl. By not doing so, the search engine bots will index all your pages – even those that are irrelevant to be found on search. Having robot.txt files will throw focus on the SEO-optimized pages to improve the overall ranking and eventual authority of your website. Your CMS should be able to auto-generate the Robots.txt file and allow you to easily update it and re-submit sitemaps.

Image optimization:

With image search taking almost 30% of searches carried out right now, optimizing your images to be picked up by search engines for relevant queries is crucial to drive your website's rich results. To start with, the image has to be marked up with schema to define the entity on the image to the search engine. Next, key information such as the meta details have to be included – image name and file name, description, alt tag, image URL, etc., and this flow has to be embedded in your digital asset management of your CMS.

JS CSS minification and linkage:

One of the most crucial factors to get ranked in search is the page experience your website offers to visitors. This requires optimization on many fronts including website load times and bandwidth usage. With JS CSS minifications of codes and markups and proper linkages, you can improve these areas, thereby drastically improving website speed and page experience. This area of SEO optimization needs tremendous effort and coding expertise if executed manually and is error prone. Hence, for best results, look out for CMSes that come with built-in support for minifying JS & CSS.

Server-Side Rendering (SSR):

The CMS should support Server-Side Rendering – that converts HTML files stored on the server into a completely rendered HTML page that it delivers to the client browser when the browser sends a request. This helps the page load faster and since search engines can crawl and index the entire website content beforehand, it helps boost SEO.

Canonicalization:

A canonical tag (aka "rel canonical") is a way of telling search engines that a specific URL represents the master copy of a page. Using the canonical tag prevents problems caused by identical or "duplicate" content appearing on multiple URLs.

Internal Search:

Internal search is the search option on your own website. Internal website search allows the visitor to go to a particular page immediately they have in mind.

SEO BASIC FUNCTIONALITIES

Image XML Sitemap:

Image sitemap information helps Google discover images that we might not otherwise find (such as images your site reaches with JavaScript code), and allows you to indicate images on your site that you want Google to crawl and index. Image XML sitemap path should be included in the robots.txt file

Video XML Sitemap:

Creating a video sitemap is an excellent way to help Google find and understand the video content on your site. Video XML sitemap should be hosted on root folder and Video XML sitemap path should be included in the robots.txt file

Breadcrumbs:

Breadcrumbs provide an easy-to-grasp way for visitors to navigate your site and they instantly understand how your site structure works

While the aforementioned SEO functionalities cover the basics every CMS should have, we're now going to move into functionalities a SEO-first CMS should entail to tackle advanced SEO and the future of search

Platform Performance and Site Speed Optimization

| Minimize HTTP requests | Minify JS & CSS | Optimize images | GZIP components |

Crawlability Optimization

| HTML validation | CSS validation | Link checker / internal links | Canonical tags | XML sitemap (images, video) |

Search Optimization

| Schemas markup | Optimized meta tags | Header tags (H1, H2, H3) | Alt Tags for images | Social tags |

SEO REPORTING

The first thing that needs to be addressed is whether the website is meeting all the aspects of the SEO guidelines such as:

A | Crawlability and indexability

B | Page experience

C | Schema and clickability

D | Content and relevancy

E | Site authority and local presence

Of course, these measurements are done constantly and having a platform that can measure any missing aspects or gaps is required.

PAGE EXPERIENCE & CORE WEB VITALS

With the rollout of the page experience algorithm, websites are now judged on the experience they offer visitors, and this is a ranking factor. Along with the page load speed, websites are now judged on the load time of the different elements of the page and how long it will take for a customer to interact with the page – which is basically the core web vitals.
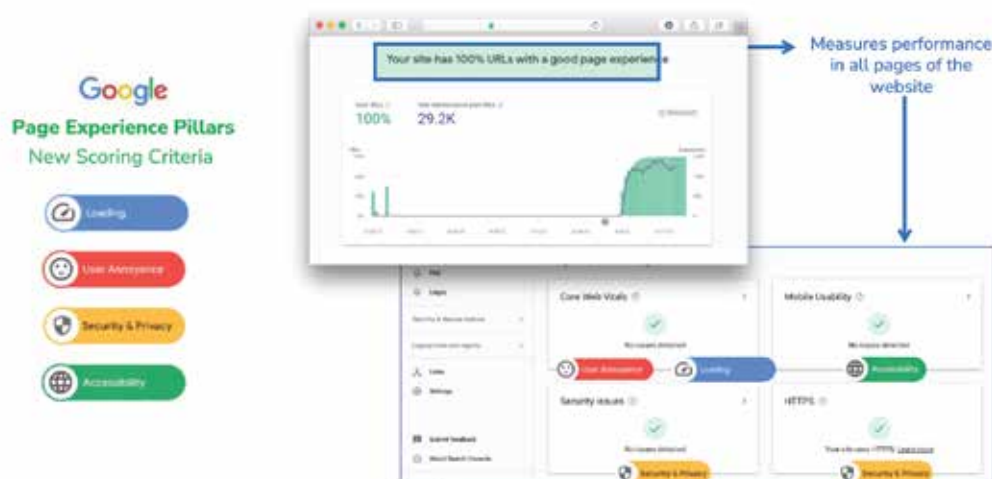
According to web.dev: "Core Web Vitals are the subset of Web Vitals that apply to all web pages, should be measured by all site owners, and will be surfaced across all Google tools. Each of the Core Web Vitals represents a distinct facet of the user experience, is measurable in the field, and reflects the real-world experience of a critical user-centric outcome".

Core Web Vitals are made up of three specific page speed and user interaction measurements: Largest Contentful Paint (LCP), First Input Delay (FID), and Cumulative Layout Shift (CLS).

1. Largest Contentful Paint (LCP)
LCP is the primary element of the update and is the time taken for the largest content on the page to load. The largest content has to load within 2.5 seconds for it to score well.

2. First Input Delay (FID)
FID is measured as the time taken till the user can make an interaction with the page. 0.1 seconds is the benchmark for it to be deemed good.

3. Cumulative Layout Shift (CLS)
This indicates the amount and time of layout shifts of the visual page content and pages should maintain a CLS of less than 0.1

PAGE EXPERIENCE & CORE WEB VITALS

Various optimization techniques such as image optimization, lazy loading of images and videos, JS optimizations, and resource prioritization help you improve your Core Web Vitals score and your CMS should have support for this.

Of course, mobile friendliness, security, and no intrusive interstitials are other factors of the Page Experience Update. While evaluating a CMS, do ask for the support the platform provides for page experience and Core Web Vitals related optimizations.

ENTITY OPTIMIZATION & SCHEMA

Let's trackback to our introduction on the search evolution. BERT, MUM, and LAMDA's ability to understand the context of a query and derive the most relevant answer is only made possible by their quest to map entities and their relationship with each other. Unlike keywords, entities are language agnostic and clearly define a specific person, place, or thing, leading to its use to understand queries all the more superior. With the latest algorithms, search engines have been mapping entities to create a knowledge graph of the world's content to deliver more relevant results.

With the road to the future set in stone for search engines – which is contextual search, entity optimization is now the opportunity for businesses to get ahead of their competition and drive visibility on search. Quality content is king, but understanding the entities on a web page is the next big step. Here's where the key ingredient schema or structured data comes into play. When a page is crawled, schema helps search engines understand the content, its structure, and the entities, and thus paving a way for the search engine to pull the content for relevant queries online.

Having a CMS which facilitates the deployment of schema across all web pages, gives the website content an edge as it doesn't leave any room for guesswork for the search engine and this has proved to drive results. Trust us.

Example of Nested Schema Architecture

MOBILE-FIRST APPROACH

Having a responsive website is great and the need of the hour, but it only scratches the surface. While a website can be optimized to be responsive, its behavior in terms of load and interactivity on different devices is critical – as mentioned in the page experience section. Having a CMS that supports Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP) is crucial to ensure the best possible experience for the most critical pages.

Coupled with Progressive Web Apps (PWA), you're sure that your page not only takes responsibility in offering the website a sublime experience with its fast load time and caching, but you're covered in terms of engagement in the form of push notifications.
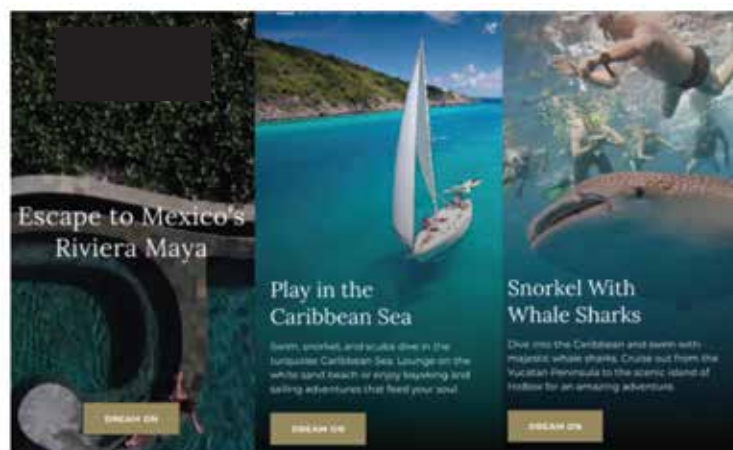

Low page load time – stripped down code, load primary content

Engaging and visual way to promote content for the mobile experience.

Brings together images, video, and text in a beautiful, animated flow.

Entice the consumer to continue the experience on your website

AMP Stories are promoted in

VOICE READY

With 40% of US consumers using voice search and 71% preferring to make voice queries rather than type, optimizing your content to go beyond text searches is a must. To meet this demand and this key aspect of the future of search, your CMS needs to support your content to be voice ready. When Google rolled out BERT, they stated that optimizing your content to be conversational is the trick for it to be picked up and conversational content along with schema is the guide to get your web-site voice search ready.

This can be facilitated quite seamlessly if your CMS supports an FAQ Management system which focuses solely on conversational content, has the ability for direct voice submissions, and supports deployment of schema.

Enterprise businesses have locations across the globe, and each location of the business has to be treated as an independent entity to reach its local ecosystem and that's where location pages are important. Think of what a business's Google Business Profile achieves on search. It offers relevance to local searches by customers with its listings of its description, attributes, amenities, reviews, hours of operation, etc., and then offers key contact details such as URL, Name, Phone, and Address for the customer to reach the business. Location pages replicate this benefit plus gives the business the opportunity to list out its menu (to be found for relevant searches as well) and offers to drive direct bookings. Of course, the content on the location page marked up with schema will help the location business drive its visibility on search and reach its local audience.
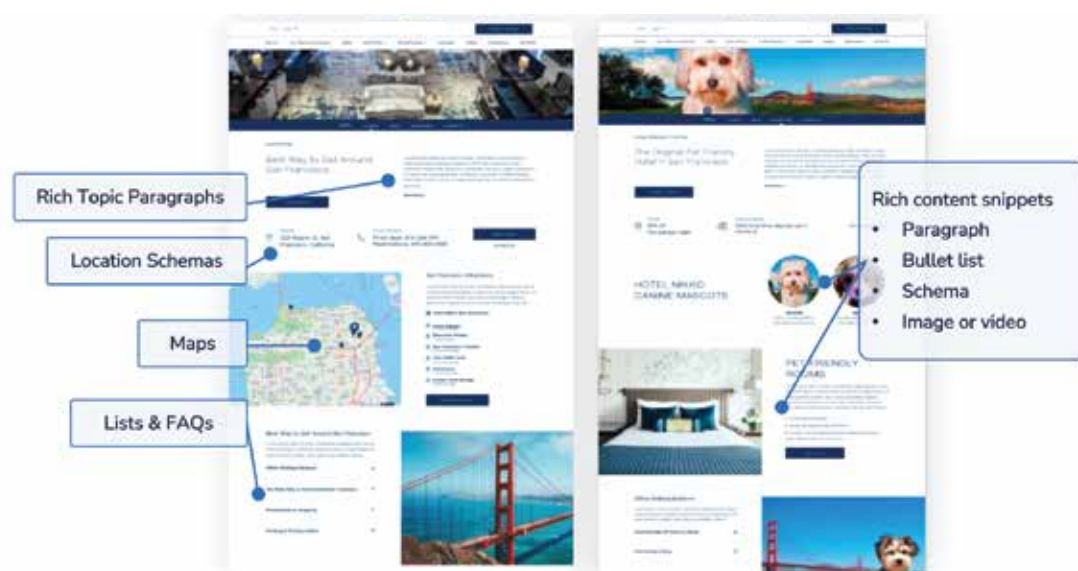
LOCATION PAGES

Everybody likes customized experiences and this can be translated online in the form of personalization. Personalization tools built into CMSes can firstly help the business reach out to audiences based on their location (Geo-targeting), interests, and behavioral patterns on search. Secondly, it can personalize the buying experience of the customer to improve the buying rate. The CMS judges the likes and dislikes of the customer and displays what he/she is most likely to purchase to improve the buying rate.

PERSONALIZATION

Blog

Blogging allows you to share information about your business and its services, but it also allows you to share opinions and thoughts on certain topics. Your CMS should allow you to publish and manage posts

UGC & Social Wall

UGC and Social Wall User-generated content (UGC) is any type of content created by users of online platforms. Providing more context for search crawlers is one of the biggest advantages of UGC. Your CMS should:

- Enable indexable reviews and post
- Allow users to write reviews and post
- Allow your business to pull reviews and post from different review channels

Social/OG tags

People are arguably more likely to see and click shared content with optimized OG tags, which means more social media traffic to your website. Open graph meta tags allow you to control what content shows up when a page is shared. Your CMS should allow you to:

- Automatically append and allow customization of OG tags
- Automatically append and allow customization of FB OG tags
- Automatically append and allow customization of Twitter OG tags

While all the above points help drive the discoverability of your content, managing volumes of content at scale require a scalable way to content creation and management. The next section focuses on the management aspects of the content.

CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

2.

CONTENT MANAGEMENT AS SELF-SERVICE

CMSes with basic authoring & publishing functionalities that get you jumpstarted with swanky looking websites are great – BUT ONLY up to a point. If you are an enterprise, or a high-growth firm, soon your needs will transcend above gorgeous-looking pages to quality-focused, high performing pages – hundreds and thousands of them. And that's when you might end up realizing that the same CMS won't cut your requirement.

Fast. Easy. Scalable - these 3 must-have benefits are what you would be looking for in your CMS at such a juncture - to deploy powerful website pages that convert. To ensure that your CMS supports your business at such levels, here are the key areas that you MUST evaluate:

EASY CONTENT AUTHORING

The first thing that needs to be addressed is whether the website is meeting all the aspects of the SEO guidelines such as:

A | In-context editing

A good in-context editor should allow content writers to seamlessly add new blocks of content on a web page or make edits to existing blocks, right in preview mode - and see how the edited page would look like, even without publishing it. This will take away the multiple back-and-forth edits you might end up doing if you can't preview the content.
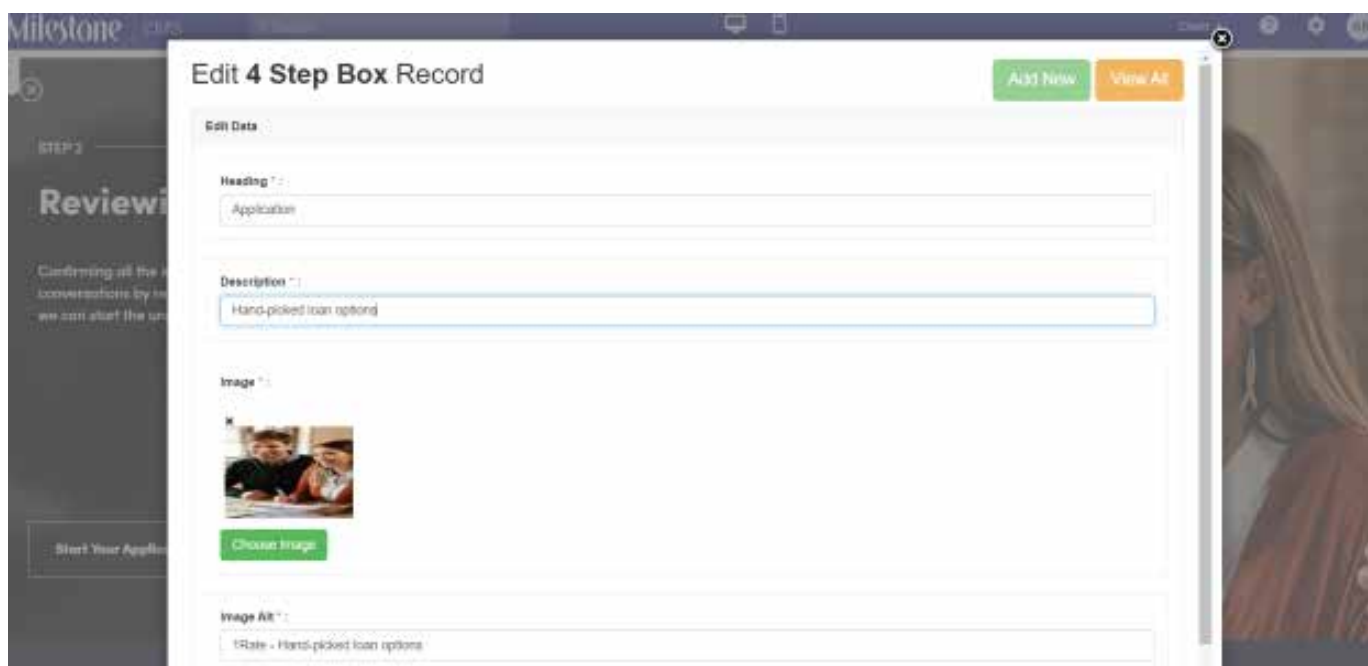
Look out for in-context editors that offer drag-&-drop functionalities to move components on a page to produce any design. These draggable components should allow you to edit them and insert text, forms, images, and videos - almost as easily as stacking up Lego blocks. All this, and more, while previewing the resulting page.

B | Distributed authoring capabilities

- An auto-dealership brand wishes to give limited CMS authoring access to franchise owners to let them fill up content for their outlet-specific website pages

- A hotel chain's corporate marketing team manages the CMS for the brand but wishes to distribute restricted content authoring functionalities to content writers representing certain hotels


These are common scenarios that various enterprises face, across different industries such as hospitality, restaurants, retail, automotive, financial services, healthcare - yet many CMSes out there in the market fail to support such use cases. The result - brands struggle with sub-optimal and fragmented approach to managing such location-specific content.

In one hand, if the content decisions are left entirely to different authors, brands would find it difficult to enforce consistency across the website. On the other hand, if the workflow management isn't seamless enough, the content writers representing these branches/franchise outlets would experience low efficiency in adding and managing location-specific information. In the end, both brands and branches see deployment expenses spiral out of control.

That's why you should focus on identifying if your brand does require such 'distributed authoring' functionalities - capabilities that would allow you to onboard multiple content writers, assign limited access permissions to them, and allow you to control and govern content publishing via approval workflows, and evaluate if the CMSes in consideration truly demonstrate such capabilities.

C | Customizable Themes
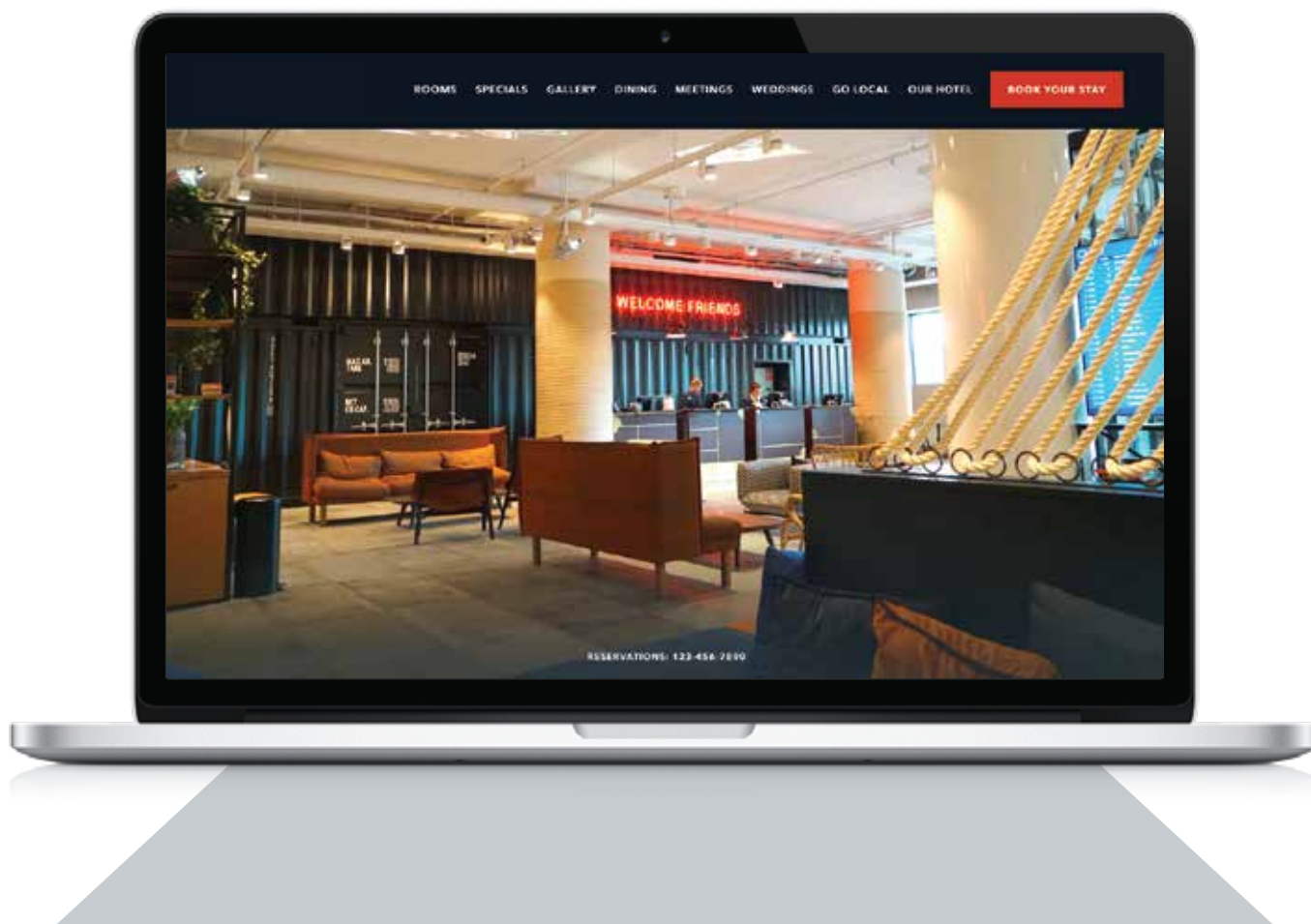
Building web pages from scratch, even with easy content blocks can take time (and a lot of brainstorming). And even after that, the website design might not match the new-age design styles and needs. Hence, while evaluating a CMS, look out for the out-of-box themes or templates that the CMS supports and allows you to pick from. Also, while evaluating the breadth of themes that could support your niche website needs, it's critical that you also look into (i) quality of themes – are they engaging enough, (ii) the extent of customization such themes allow, and (iii) is the theme completely responsive to different device types and browsers. Can you add a new block of content or replace a component in entirety? Does the theme allow you to build all critical pages you are planning to deploy? Answering these questions could help you understand the usefulness of the themes.

CENTRALIZED DIGITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT

Digital assets are stored content of any form - text, images, videos, music files, icons, animations, documents, etc. With the ever-expanding spectrum of channels available to engage with a customer beyond websites, brands today need centralized storage, retrieval, optimization, and distribution of digital assets via multiple media channels.

Centralized Digital Asset Management (DAM) are systems that let businesses systematically store, organize, manage, retrieve, and distribute digital assets providing a 'single source of truth' to the business while delivering a consistent brand experience to customers across all touchpoints.

With a DAM that connects well with multiple channels, you can now ensure that the latest brand video you've published, or an updated content of your business description gets seamlessly published not just to your website, but also to the business directories, review channels, messaging systems, and more.

Your CMS must support DAM based on your business needs:

Built-in DAM	DAM extensions
In case your business does not have a DAM implemented already to centralize your digital assets, check if the CMS offers a powerful DAM functionality to manage the digital assets for your website, and beyond!	If your business has a DAM already implemented that you do not wish to replace, the CMS must support extensions to connect with the existing DAM. That way, instead of publishing assets again in CMS, the CMS itself could fetch them from the DAM for website publishing purposes.

If you do not have an existing DAM, here are the key features to look out for while evaluating DAM functionality in a CMS:

1. CENTRALIZED ASSET LIBRARY:

The DAM should include an asset library to centrally store and organize assets

☞ Types supported: The DAM should support all types of digital assets such as images, videos, audio, icons, other document types (PDFs, PPTs, etc.)

☞ Upload: The CMS should offer easy upload utilities (UI-based or integrations, individual assets as well as bulk upload utilities)

☞ Search & retrieve: With proper indexing, the assets should be enabled for easy search, retrieval and distribution via UI as well as other means

☞ Organize: All assets uploaded in DAM should be organized in a structured manner (e.g., folders & groups), encoded and indexed. The assets should be indexed with attributes that capture asset types, version, and categorization
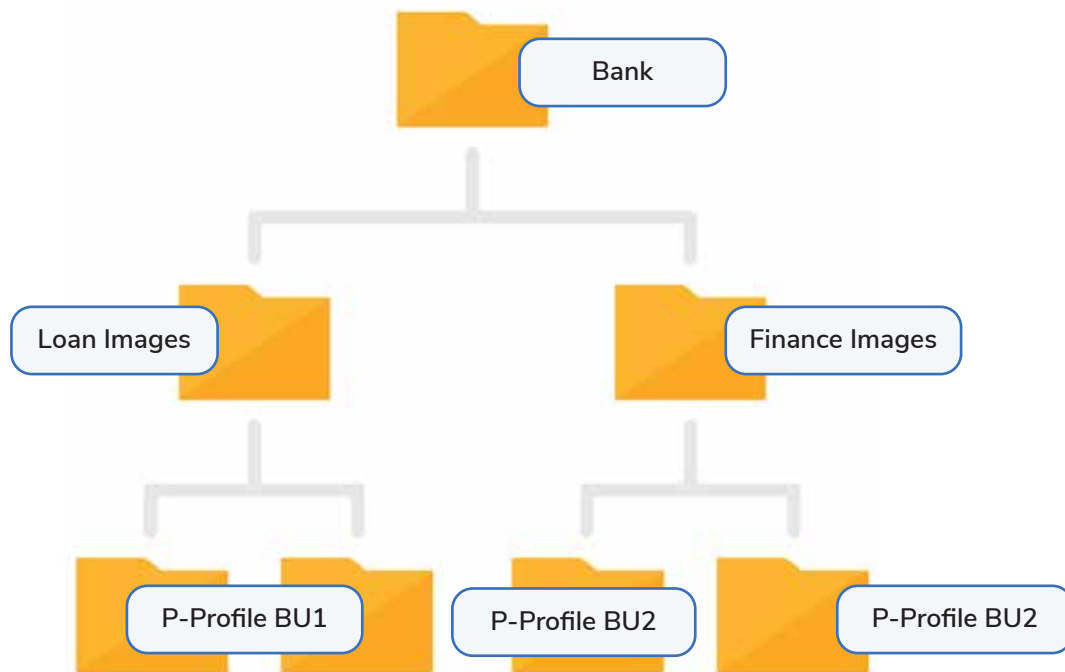
2. ASSET MANAGEMENT :

☞ Optimize assets: You'd want the best possible visibility on search for your assets and assets need to be optimized with schema and meta details such as an asset name, folder name, URL, description, etc., for the search engine bots to have a clear context of the assets to draw it as a relevant result

☞ User permissions & role-based access: the CMS should offer different access permissions based on user roles to ensure proper governance

☞ Workflows: Rule-based, permission-based workflow automation should be supported by the DAM for upload and distribution of the assets

☞ Version control: Ensure all/last few versions of an asset are maintained with history so that they can be rolled-back in future, if needed

☞ Usage tracking: Track customer interactions of the asset when published online. If the asset shows up as a rich result, it needs to be tracked for the business to understand the type of assets that work with its customers

☞ Asset Distribution: The CMS's DAM functionality should not just enable your business to publish on website, but also other channels such as business directories, voice assistants, social channels, etc. It should also allow easy integration with other internal tools used by the organization

INSTANT PUBLISHING ACROSS CHANNELS

One of the key asks for any CMS is a 1-click publishing utility that lets you preview and publish content instantly on website: no delays, no codes, no additional deployment cycles – just a click (or couple of clicks) to publish – and the changes should go live and reflect on the website instantly.

While most CMSes today do offer some sort of click-to-publish functionality, what's important is to understand the ease with which the publishing can be scaled - does the CMS allow multiple changes to be stored as drafts for later and published in one go? Let's look at what similar aspects need to be evaluated to take a go versus no-go decision for the CMS you are looking at:

Draft > Preview > Publish process:

In certain scenarios, the content writer writing a piece of content for the website might not want to push the edits to the website right away

☞   If the content writer has unfinished changes

☞   If a series of website changes across multiple pages need to go live at once, the content writer drafting a change on one of the pages might wish to save it for publishing when rest of the changes across pages are ready to go live

In such scenarios, content writers would want to have a mechanism to save the changes in draft mode. The writers should be able to access the drafts easily at a later point of time and either (i) edit and publish, or (ii) discard the draft.

The content writers should also be able to 'Preview' the final set of changes before publishing them. Finally, once the edits are finalized, the content writer/owner should be able to publish them instantly on the website with ease.

1. BULK-PUBLISHING

The CMS should allow users the flexibility to save content edits as drafts and publish them at once.

2. VERSION CONTROL

With multiple edits happening in webpage content, its essential that the CMS users are able to view history of past changes made to the content, and if need be revert to the past versions. Key characteristics of good version control mechanism include:

- view change history with timestamp and user details
- view not just page level, but even component level changes
- version rollback mechanism

3. CONTENT MODERATION WORKFLOW

For enhanced governance, a good CMS should typically support well-defined user roles and permissions. This should be backed with a content moderation workflow that could restrict certain users from publishing content changes to website without approvals.

4. SCHEDULE PUBLISHING

For content being created in advance, the CMS should offer scheduling feature to go – live with edits on a pre-defined date and time. That way, your users need not wait for 12:00 AM to publish a limited period offer. Likewise, the CMS should also be able to offer flexibilities such as back-dated publishing as well.

5. CROSS-CHANNEL PUBLISHING:

Oh! Wait. This one is important! In an era of cross-channel marketing, true customer engagement is defined by the consistency and relevancy of messaging across multiple channels. While it's great to have a CMS that supports click-to-publish functionality that publishes content to a webpage, what's even better is if the same content management application allows you to distribute centralized content (e.g, from DAM) to other channels alongside – accelerated mobile pages (AMP), apps & progressive web apps (PWA), local directories (e.g. Google Business Profile, Yelp), voice assistants (e.g. Google Assistant, Alexa) and more.

DECOUPLED AND BEYOND!

Content management reaches its crux when choosing the architecture of the CMS. There's no right or wrong here and choosing one that suits your business's needs is the way forward. The problem or rather limitation with traditional CMSes is that the front-end and back-end are coupled. This means that any change made on the back-end impacts the front-end processes and vice versa. This results in downtime for any change (even for a single piece of content), lack of agility, and flexibility for the marketing needs of the company in terms of staying abreast with the latest trends and customer preferences.
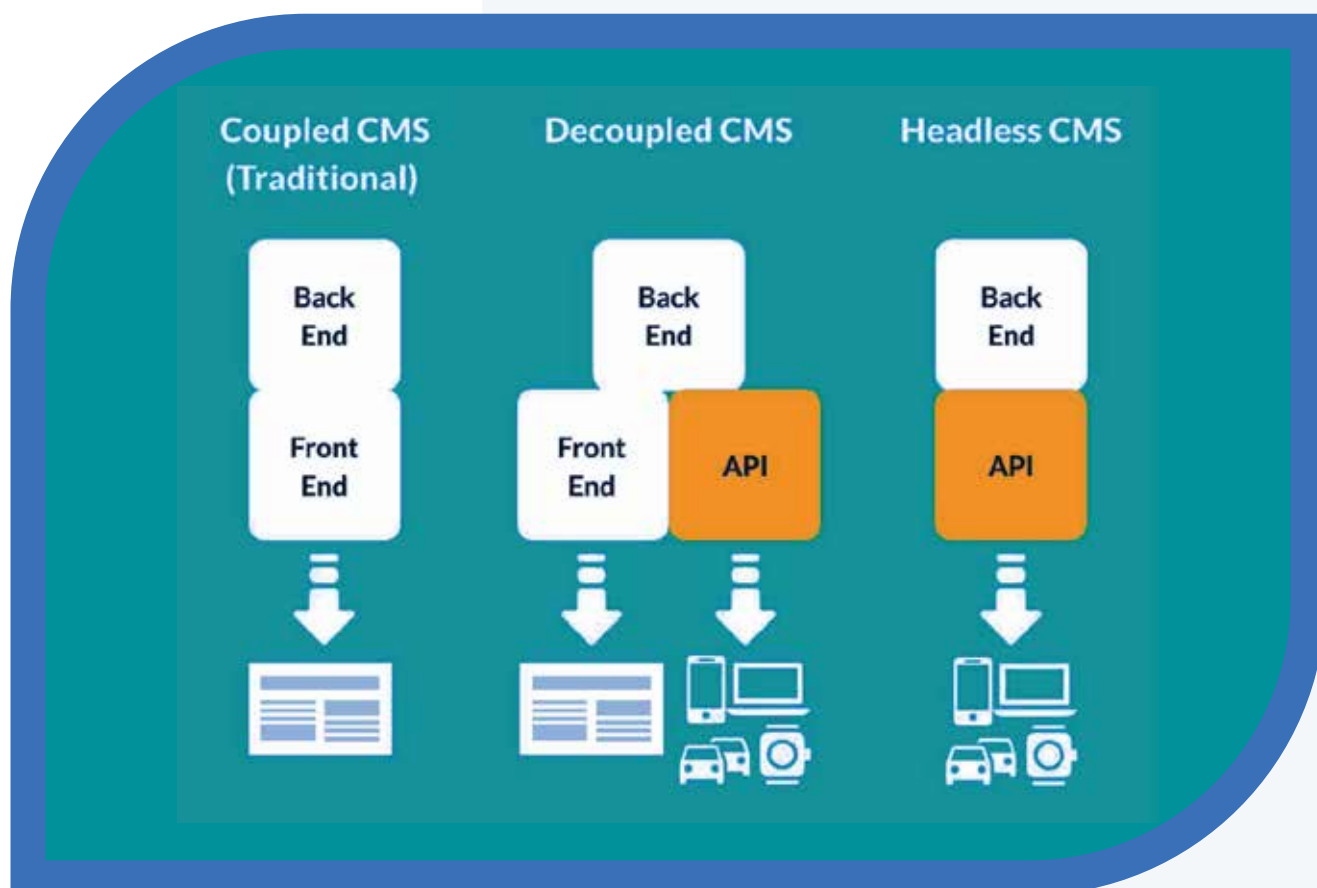
DECOUPLED ARCHITECTURE

An answer to this is the decoupled architecture. As the name states, the content repository and creation tools are separate from the interface or presentation layer. This allows the business to carry out multiple back-end processes without impacting what is presented. The content from the back-end is published via APIs to the presentation layer or the screen of the viewer such as a desktop, mobile, tablet, app, smart watches, etc. Which means the content changed once will be published everywhere to meet the omnichannel needs of the business.

HYBRID/HEADLESS ARCHITECTURE

We further move into headless or the amalgamated architecture in hybrid/-headless. When it comes to headless, think decoupled, with the exception that there aren't publishing capabilities or the front-end or presentation later. What exists is the back-end for content repository and creation and this is directly delivered to devices such as desktop, mobile, voice devices, tablets, smart watches, etc., to give the business the opportunity of an omnichannel presence. Hybrid/Headless on the other hand is the combination of decoupled and headless architecture to give businesses the best of both worlds.

MACH (MICROSERVICES, API-FIRST, CLOUD-NATIVE, HEADLESS APPROACH)

Let's move to the next piece of architecture which offers flexibility, agility, and the assurance of the business being future-proof to tackle the evolution of search trends and customer behavior – MACH (Microservices, API-first, Cloud-native, Headless Approach). Fundamentally, this is built on the aforementioned architectures with the benefit of it being cloud-based to store and deliver content easily and the microservices layer which allows the business to be elastic with the services loosely coupled and independent to ensure the evolution of the business's needs in terms of its services and offerings. As with the decoupled architecture, the content is delivered to devices or screens via APIs.

A

B

C

Milestone

ENTERPRISE GRADE

When you're talking enterprise, you're referring to scalability. Considering that teams could be spread across the globe, you'll have to focus on how you can streamline workflows, the speed of your content to market and the fact that you are reaching out to audiences across the globe and meeting their needs. With that in mind here are aspects to keep in mind with the goal of speed to market and scalability:

A   The Multi-CMS approach

Agile CMSes are now the talk of the town and this is precisely where even flagship CMSes have their limitations. Sure, they were built for scale, but they were built for a certain purpose and it's often that they don't entirely meet all the goals of the business and that's where a complimentary CMS steps-in to ensure the business's speed to market. For example, take a flagship CMS that's built for eCommerce. The inventory and booking engine built could be stellar but it could fall short it terms of its content creation and publishing functionalities. Having a CMS that could meet those demands will give the business the best in both worlds.

B   Roles & Permissions

For any enterprise business, their teams are going to be situated in different locations and to streamline the workflow having the roles and permissions functionality is a requirement. This allows certain teams to carry out their functions and leave the final publishing aspects to the top management for approvals prior to the content going live. For example, some teams will have content creation access, others content moderation and the high-level roles will only have the option of publishing the content. This allows the business to have absolute control of what's being published to their customers.

C   Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning

When scalability and speed to market is the topic, nothing trumps artificial intelligence and machine learning. Inculcating AI and ML in your functions will help you speed up the process of personalized content creation, image tagging, managing your assets, SEO recommendations, voice commands and lots more. For example, think of a chatbot on your home page. Using AI and ML you can train the chatbot to answer queries of your customers with relevance, thereby, reducing the support demand of your business.

D   Multi-regional Translation

An enterprise business is going to reach out to customers speaking different languages and in order to address their needs, having a translation module plugged into your CMS is an absolute need. It's simple, by not doing so, you're leaving huge portions of potential customers out of the equation.

E   Notifications

Having platform notifications is essential to streamline the workflow of an enterprise business as well as call-out maintenance and performance dips or increases. Tie this function with roles and permissions. If a particular team has created the content, the moderation and publishing team have to be aware that the next steps have to be picked up and that's done through platform notifications.

F   Hierarchical site creation

Consistency is key to sustaining a customer base and for this the navigational and site structure of your website is crucial. Firstly, you'll want to create a structure that will last for years to come and the hierarchical structure is the most adopted for websites with a lot of data and categories. Think of it as a family tree, you start with critical categories (parents) and these sections move into smaller categories (children) to ensure that navigation across the website is logical and simple for all types of visitors.

G Built-in compliance

To make sure that the website is accessible to those disabled and keeping in mind that they use screen readers to access websites, a website needs to be compliant with the accessibility laws as well protect the data of website visitors which should be supported by the CMS. Here are the key compliance aspects your CMS should take care of:

☞ Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

☞ Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1

☞ The European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

☞ California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA)

3.

VERTICAL AGNOSTIC ADD-ONS & INTEGRATIONS

A CMS that understands the needs of your industry will give you an edge when it comes to creating a highly engaging website. This will allow you to cater to your industry-specific needs while designing a great customer journey.

In this section, we'll cover the key industry add-ons that are focused on driving revenue for the business and creating a seamless management workflow in the process:

Hospitality   Financial   Retail   Automotive   Healthcare   Enterprise

HOSPITALITY

The hospitality industry online has become a highly competitive environment, with Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) accounting for a little more than 60% of all bookings last year. To participate in this massively popular booking channel hotels pay OTAs anywhere between 5% to 30% as commission and to top it off OTAs also control most of the customer's booking information, the cream of the data. How did they do this? By creating excellent booking journeys for customers before they even begin their trip! Therefore, it is important to have a CMS that remains a step ahead of these booking giants and focuses on driving back direct bookings. Here are some features your CMS should support to help you drive direct bookings:

1

Booking Engine Integration

Features like a dedicated booking engine that makes direct bookings on your website easy and fast can give you the edge to win back direct bookings.

2

Event Calendar

A CMS event calendar that not only promotes your events but also ensures your hotel appears in searches for local events. A CMS that can manage event dates across locations can greatly improve your relevance on search and drive footfall to your property.

3

Special offers

When you have special offers for your products you need to get the word out, and the CMS you choose should be your loudspeaker, it should allow you to manage special offers across locations such as limited time offers (LTO), holiday banners, offer coupons to drive a sense of urgency for a buy. After all, think about the fact that 80% of online customers prefer to make a purchase when there is an offer or discount.

4

Revenue Recovery

Several times customers add items to their cart but do not end up hitting the 'Buy' button for some reason or another, following up with these customers with more attractive offers for their products can help with revenue recovery. A CMS that integrates a strong revenue recovery model can win back these high-intent customers, things like a follow-up email or a discount message before they leave the page can have some surprising effects.

RESTAURANTS

Being discoverable and engaging with customers is key for restaurants and a SEO-first CMS should support the following:

☞ Creation of online menus that are indexable by search engines and searchable as menu items

☞ Integration with many reservations systems like OpenTable, Yelp, Eat2Eat, Nextdoor, and more

☞ Integration with business directory Yelp for automated updating of listings and ability to respond to reviews

☞ Feeds from leading social networks, allowing your social content to be easily posted on your site

☞ Integration with Online Travel Agencies (OTAs), so users can make rate comparisons and book directly

Milestone

AUTOMOTIVE

For any automotive site, the most important thing is your inventory. It can be quite expensive and time-consuming to get an inventory system to integrate well with the website. Not to mention, the updates should reflect near real-time, to make sure customers never see stale inventory.

If your CMS can provide an inventory module that allows you to not only create inventory of cars, but also upload images, integrate with any third parties and ensure that any updates are reflected instantly, your peace of mind is guaranteed!

Here are the other aspects your CMS should help you with for Automotive websites:

- The car inventory is fully indexable by search engines
- Autodealer locator search, for finding the nearest dealership
- Automated building of car and car product pages, from a content database
- Voice search-enabled FAQ pages, so answers to common questions can be spoken by voice agents like Amazon Alexa
- Online forms so users can request specific appointment times

RETAIL

The final goal of the site is to convert visitors into buyers. This requires payment integration that enables you to build an end-to-end flow with ease. In addition to that, connections to a Marketplace and Inventory management systems ensure that your entire ecosystem functions seamlessly with little effort. Here are the checkpoints your CMS needs to have to meet the needs of retail businesses:

- Site integration with an E-commerce platform, for ready implementation of E-commerce capabilities and online stores
- Real-time checking of integrated inventory, so customers can be informed if a product is in stock or not
- A site locator for finding the nearest store branch, within a geographical area or a given distance
- A Request-for-Proposal (RFP) online form, for the creation of RFPs for vendors

FINANCIAL SERVICES

Support by the CMS for the following is essential to meet the need of financial services:

- Product-specific pages highlighting loans, mortgages and other lending, automatically built and maintained in our content database
- Locators to find branches and ATMs, by geography or distance from user
- Real-time display on the site of the bank's current stock price
- Forms so users can request specific appointment times
- Ability to easily create and manage a newsroom for publishing press releases and other updates

CORPORATE WEBSITES

For a CMS to support corporate websites, it will need to checkbox the following:

- Integration between the website and a customer relationship management (CRM) to track customer contact and other relationship management
- Support for translation of real-time data into multiple languages
- Ability to easily create and manage a members-only section on the website, such as for stock holders, board members, VIP customers and so on

- Auto-responders for vendors who respond to your company's Request for Proposals (RFPs)

- Ability to easily create and manage a newsroom for publishing press releases and other updates

HEALTHCARE

Any visitor to a healthcare site usually is looking for certain facilities, physician or to get more information. The CMS should make it easy by allowing for:

- Flexible search features

- Good site architecture

- Easy ways to raise queries using chatbots

- Form submissions and call links

FULL FUNNEL ANALYTICS

Having an in-depth analysis of your online presence is an invaluable tool in this highly competitive environment. A CMS that can collect and deliver granular data about your online traffic and presence is vital to monitoring the effectiveness of your online strategy. Here are some touchpoints your CMS needs to meet to offer your business analytics across the customer journey:

1. Omnichannel Analytics:

A CMS that can deliver omni-channel analytics across organic, paid and local search and customer journeys will give you a bird's eye view of your online visibility.

2. Multi-location Analytics :

Geo-personalized analytics for multi-location businesses can provide maximum efficiency when it comes to marketing efforts.

3. **Competitive Benchmarking:**

Insights into competitors and setting benchmarks allows businesses to devise competitive online strategies.

4. **Asset Analytics :**

An important part of understanding asset usage through DAM is with a detailed Analytics report. If your CMS offers an Asset Analytics dashboard, you can easily know which assets are being accessed more, and also understand any usage patterns.

5. **Predictive Analytics :**

A more advanced way to use DAM Analytics data is to make predictions on which images would likely convert more, based on past history and personalize the experience based on that. This involves a cutting-edge user journey funnel mapping, to generate predictions on images that would convert for similar future users.

A CMS that integrates full funnel analytics will help you minimize trial and error and create decisive strategies for your SEO-first approach.

CONCLUSION

Re-emphasizing, getting ahead of your competition is the goal and having your SEO covered by your CMS is essential to avoid down-time in visibility on search and engagement with your customers following site live and through the course of the evolution of your business.

SEO-FIRST CMS EVALUATION CHECKLIST

SEO-FIRST CMS EVALUATION CHECKLIST	'Y' IF AVAILABLE, 'N' IF NOT
Content Discovery	
SEO basic functionalities - meta data, URL setting, page linking, navigation/menu structure, bulk 301 redirects, SSL, XML sitemaps, robots.txt, image optimization, JS CSS minification, server-side rendering	
SEO reporting	
Page Experience & Core Web Vitals	
Schema & Entity Optimization	
Mobile-first Approach with AMP & PWA	
Voice Ready	
Location pages	
Personalization	
Content Management as Self-service	
Easy content authoring	
Centralized Digital Asset Management • Built-in DAM • DAM Extensions	
Instant publishing across channels	
Decoupled Architecture & MACH	
Enterprise Grade	
Full-funnel Analytics	
Revenue Drivers: Vertical-specific add-ons	

Milestone's industry-leading SEO-first CMS delivers 30% more revenue and leads based on advanced SEO technology built into the website CMS. That's why our CMS is used by over 10,000 businesses and brands in hospitality, automotive, banking, retail, b2b, and many other segments.

Milestone CMS comes with an SEO Panel which offers visibility on the SEO aspects that are taken care of by our CMS - bringing all your SEO needs on a single screen.

Best-in-Class Content Authoring

1-Click Omnichannel Publishing

Digital Asset Management

Voice Ready

SEO-first

Milestone CMS – a truly SEO-first CMS

Enterprise Grade

API-first Decoupled CMS

Vertical-agnostic Add-ons & Integrations

Full Funnel Analytics

Speed, Reliability, Compliance, Security

Milestone CMS - Trusted by major Fortune 500 brands to deliver best-in-class digital experience and cited by Forrester for Agile CMS & Multi-CMS.

You could also request a comprehensive SEO audit _right here._

For a quick demo of Milestone CMS, Contact Us

WEBINAR

To give you detailed insights on the topic, join our webinar on '10 must-haves for an SEO-first CMS'.

In this webinar session, Benu Aggarwal, Founder & President - Milestone Inc., explains as she introduces the 10 must-have pillars that define "SEO-first CMS".

In this webinar you will learn:

• Why most brands fail to be visible on search and find it difficult to see value from their SEO efforts

• Top 10 areas of focus to evaluate if a CMS is true "SEO-first" or not

• How top brands are driving SEO results on their websites with the SEO-first CMS approach

THANK YOU !