

# Solving the Software Puzzle

Software is fundamental to the success of every Web enterprise. Choose the right software for your business' specific needs and you will find a valued business partner.

By Peter Prestipino

Selecting software requires we answer important questions. Do you need a better way to share and distribute content? If so, your answer is a powerful, yet user-friendly content management system.

Do you need to develop a better relationship with prospects and existing customers? A customer relationship management (CRM) software solution to empower your sales and marketing staff is what you'll need.

Want to sell an exciting new gadget you designed and developed? Seek only e-commerce platforms of the highest caliber. Need others to help sell those gadgets? Affiliate management software is widely available and may even be built into your existing e-commerce solution.

Each of these types of software solutions comprise the pieces that can help solve the Web success puzzle. These platforms power our websites in the form of content management systems and weblogs, automate commerce, and enable us to communicate on a level perhaps never conceived of by the Web's founders.

Let's review the components and how they can fit to ensure the best chance of success on the Web, and look at some of the vendors who are making it happen.

## Content Management Systems

Content management systems (CMS) are software applications designed to store, manage and distribute HTML content and digital assets, and are available in a number of hybrid varieties. Most feature a system where users can deploy a default template or skin them per their own branding elements, offer editable content, are scalable with plugins (more common among open source systems) and rely on Web standards. More sophisticated systems offer workflow management, delegation and advanced document management to ensure content never exceeds its predetermined lifecycle. CMS are often more alike than they are different but often the determining factor is the scale that a website or business needs.

The major change on the Web since its commercial inception nearly two decades ago is that more people are involved in the

