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# The digital transformation killer: Poor CMS implementation

The stakes are high, but the payoff is immense. Use your CMS implementation as an opportunity to kickstart real digital transformation across your business.



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4 MINUTE READ

Your organization just spent months evaluating different content management systems. You did demos, proof of concepts, and requirements-gathering sessions. And at the end of it all, you selected what seemed like the perfect platform to underpin your digital presence. But remarkably quickly, the wheels start to come off: Broken workflows disrupt operations, content gaps emerge, and costs balloon.

If this sounds like a familiar scenario, you're not alone—many companies go through this rollercoaster ride. The expectations are high for how the shiny new CMS will revolutionize workflows and digitally transform your business. But once implemented, everyone is left scratching their heads wondering what went wrong.

The obvious conclusion would be that the software isn't up to scratch—but in truth, the CMS is rarely at fault. Most of the leading platforms have hundreds of successful implementations under their belt. The issue is how the CMS is set up, configured, and rolled out in a specific enterprise environment.

## THE DOMINO EFFECT OF IMPLEMENTATION MISSTEPS

A CMS improperly implemented can completely derail your digital transformation, leading to fragmented teams, outdated web presences, and plummeting conversion rates. Here's why:

### • NO CUSTOMIZATION WHERE NEEDED

Selecting the right CMS platform is key for any digital overhaul. Off-the-shelf systems provide a generic foundation suitable for many use cases. However, most implementations require customization to address unique needs.

Flexibility to customize is, for this reason, an important evaluation criterion when researching CMS options, as platforms vary in what they allow. Properly scoping custom enhancements is critical, as poor planning often leads to under-delivery. The ideal CMS enables tailored customization to meet specific requirements for a smooth transition.

### • NOT LISTENING TO INTERNAL USERS

The people actually using the CMS day-to-day have tremendous insights. But many implementations focus heavily on the public-facing website and neglect internal users.

Things like confusing workflows, unclear validation messages and poor template labeling might seem minor, but they can quickly frustrate users and reduce adoption. Taking the time to deeply understand internal user needs results in a CMS finely configured to best support them.

### • TECHNICAL DEBT PILES UP

Many implementations take shortcuts to meet tight timelines, accruing a technical debt that will eventually need to be paid back. Things like unclear taxonomy modeling, improper developer workflows, and rushed data migration might get you over the initial finish line, but when all is said and done, cutting corners makes future maintenance, upgrades, and enhancements extremely painful.

### • UNREALISTIC CONTENT POPULATION TIMELINES

Companies often underestimate the effort needed to populate content into a new CMS. Migrating and reworking existing content, while also creating new content for new templates and features, takes significant time. Setting unrealistic timelines means the rollout will be light on content from the start.

### • NO GOVERNANCE PROCESSES

Once the CMS is live, how will it be managed and enhanced moving forward? Not defining operational governance upfront means the system can quickly become fragmented and unoptimized. Issues like inconsistent templates, redundant content structures, and outdated modules may emerge.

## LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR SUCCESS

You can't build digital transformation on a shaky CMS foundation. Planning the proper implementation might take more time upfront, but it avoids major headaches once the system is live. Here are five ways to set your CMS rollout up for success.

### 1. INVOLVE DEVELOPERS EARLY

Developers will be using the CMS constantly, so make sure it fits cleanly in their stack and that they have the skills to customize it as needed. Have developers participate in the selection process to ensure the platform aligns with internal capabilities, and give them time to create POCs and spike solutions to validate the platform.

### 2. TALK TO INTERNAL USERS

Thoroughly interview users; don't just gather surface requirements. Observe workflows directly through "contextual inquiry." This is especially important for matrixed organizations whose complex structure often requires custom CMS workflows.

Capture nuanced likes, dislikes, and wishes. Use insights to finely tailor the implementation and workflows to the organization's processes. This matches the platform to the users for an intuitive adoption that leverages its strengths.

### 3. AUTOMATE DATA MIGRATION

Start data migration activities on day one by identifying all data sources and developing repeatable, automated processes to migrate content. It's worth building a custom data migration application within the CMS itself to allow importing and reimporting of existing data.

This provides teams with an integrated mechanism to refresh information throughout the project lifecycle, ensuring content populates in an organized manner as new material is created

### 4. ALLOW AMPLE CONTENT PREPARATION TIME

Companies frequently underestimate how long the content population process takes. It often takes months to review content, determine relevance, and identify ownership before migrating existing content while creating new content. It's vital to build in extra timelines and remember to start the content preparation process early so these activities can happen in parallel with development.

### 5. PUT GOVERNANCE PROCESSES IN PLACE

Define exactly how the CMS will be managed and enhanced post-launch. Outline roles and responsibilities, and create a roadmap for ongoing improvements and new features. Define and build reporting tools to track CMS health and adoption metrics. This governance keeps the CMS optimized over the long term.

## THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

A CMS implementation done right acts as the cornerstone for true digital transformation—and a poor implementation can derail even the best-conceived digital strategy. That's why it's vital to approach your rollout carefully, involve all stakeholders, and resist the temptation to take shortcuts. This will deliver a CMS that delights both internal and external users and becomes a powerful driver of organizational change.

The stakes are high, but the payoff is immense. Use your CMS implementation as an opportunity to kickstart real digital transformation across your business. Build a solid foundation with your CMS rollout, and the sky's the limit on where you can take your digital strategy next.