Drupal:
A Comprehensive
Guide to the CMS Platform

WHITE PAPER

Executive Summary

In today's hyper-competitive digital era of business, the time it takes for the audience to get what they want defines their experience. The lesser the wait, the better it the experience is. Businesses today are no longer compared based on their offerings with direct competition. It is all about how well they serve their end-users.

The pandemic has further put a thrust on the digital medium, which was already witnessing an accelerated transformation. The year 2020 saw over two billion people purchasing goods and services online. The rising popularity of online purchases is a testimony to increasing consumer confidence in such mediums.

A satisfied customer will usually buy more, return, and also tell others to do the same. There cannot be a better marketing tool for a business than positive word of mouth publicity from its existing customers. It is thus essential for organizations to understand that providing the best digital experiences to consumers is beneficial for future growth and customer loyalty.

But how is it possible to offer the best digital experiences, and where does Drupal fit into the context? With every update on the platform, the Drupal CMS has opened up several possibilities for websites and applications. It is a CMS that keeps customer experience at the heart of everything. This whitepaper explores the growing importance of Drupal and how you can leverage it to offer the best digital experience to your audience.

Introduction to Drupal

Drupal is a free, open-source content management system (CMS) and web application framework. The CMS and its community have grown in large numbers over the years. More than 1,000,000 developers, designers, strategists, and trainers are a part of the Drupal community. There are eight versions launched since its release back in 2001. Let us take a look at the platform's evolution from the point of view of digital management.

The Drupal 7 version was launched in 2011, offering new improvements and features to meet the changing needs of users. Digital experience management was gaining traction at that point in time. As websites began gaining interactive capabilities, there was a need for regular updating and management of content. There were new features related to URL handling, integrations and templating with CRM and e-commerce systems.

The origins of Drupal go back to the year **2000** when two university students Dries Buytaert and Hans Snijder set up a wireless bridge between their dorms out of the need for a reliable internet connection.

2015 saw the release of the Drupal 8 version, which brought with it more than 200 features. Mobile optimizations and new page editing options were in large numbers. It was one of the essential updates at that time as businesses needed a comprehensive CMS. They were looking for something that would support both IoT devices and mobile apps. This version of Drupal ensured that users could experience the complete functionalities of a website from the device they used.

The latest version, Drupal 9, launched in 2020, is an excellent representation of the crowded CMS landscapes of the present times. It is more important than ever for businesses to offer digital experiences that are unique, aesthetic, and targeted. The latest version brings with it modern tools, modules, and an expanded open-source network. It becomes possible today for companies to integrate their web assets to collect user demographics. It helps in better targeting to convert prospects into leads.

DATA

Seamless
Content Management

Versioning
Control

CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Peer-to-Peer
Networking

Collaborative
Efforts

The Importance of CMS and Emergence of Drupal as a Preferred Option for Businesses Over the Years

Content management systems (CMS) help in the creation and modification of digital content through enterprise-wide collaboration. A CMS also gets popularly referred to as a web content management system. Organizations use these systems to bring together digital assets, document management, and online content on a unified platform.

There are different permission levels for users who can get role-based access. It remains applicable for digital content, web projects, and intranet applications. Users get backend systems for managing the web content, which is similar to web pages. They can organize content and get an optimized workflow.

These systems offer features like version control, web-based publishing, and format management. They help in maintaining the content history of websites. The added features also help in better search and retrieval of information through content indexing. So, choosing the apt CMS holds paramount importance. This is where Drupal enters the scene as a formidable option.

There are more than
47,000
free Drupal modules available
for download.

Drupal has been one of the best innovations in the world of content management systems. It is a free and customizable solution that enables seamless content management, collaborative efforts, and peer-to-peer networking. One of the striking aspects of the platform is its ability to publish content across several platforms and devices at once.

There is additionally the ever-reliable support of a large open-source community. It enables businesses to get long-term feasibility and extensive scaling solutions. The software is available under a General Public License and written in PHP. Businesses have a better chance at innovation through robust enterprise solutions. There is also support for customization and flexibility through a structured platform that offers dynamic web pages.

Benefits of
Benefits of Using an Open-Source CMS Like Drupal

A CMS, like any other software, has two main categories. There are open source and closed source platforms. Open-source platforms make the code available for everyone. Users can also modify these codes based on their needs. Closed source codes remain available only to developers who have created them. Let's take a look at reasons why open-source CMS platforms are preferred options.

Cost-efficiency

A website with an open-source CMS will not be completely free. Yes, you can download the software free of cost and install it on your system. However, there is a lot more you need to do to make the website fully functional. It will require a proper setup, security measures, search engine optimization, and user-friendliness.

If you hire an agency or a freelance developer, you will have to pay them. Besides, you will also have to pay for templates, extensions, and plugins if you opt for their premium versions. However, despite these costs, open-source CMS platforms remain a better option than closed ones.

Closed-source CMS platforms require you to pay monthly or annual charges. If not, you will lose access to your website. If you have an e-commerce website, you will also have to part with a portion of your sales in addition to the monthly/annually fees you pay.

Flexibility and freedom

One of the strong points of an open-source CMS platform is the freedom on offer. When you get access to the source code, the possibilities of customizing your website are limitless. You can hire an agency or individual developer who can customize your website the way you want. In the case of a closed-source CMS, you do not get to enjoy all these benefits.

If you are not satisfied with any aspect of the website, you cannot go back and change it. You will have to rebuild the complete website again. There is also the threat of closed-source CMS provider's operations getting affected for any reason. Your website would be on the line in such a scenario. An open-source CMS allows you to own your website in the true sense.

> More than **1500** members of the Drupal community come together each month to enhance the platform.

Community support

Millions of Drupal users around the world use the platform to run their websites. This user base also includes expert developers who have a strong knowledge of how the platform works. Whenever any bug or issue arises, these developers get involved quickly and fix them through timely updates.

For new users who are just starting, there are several community forums and free tutorials to get accustomed to. YouTube explainer videos are another credible source to learn the intricate details of the platform.
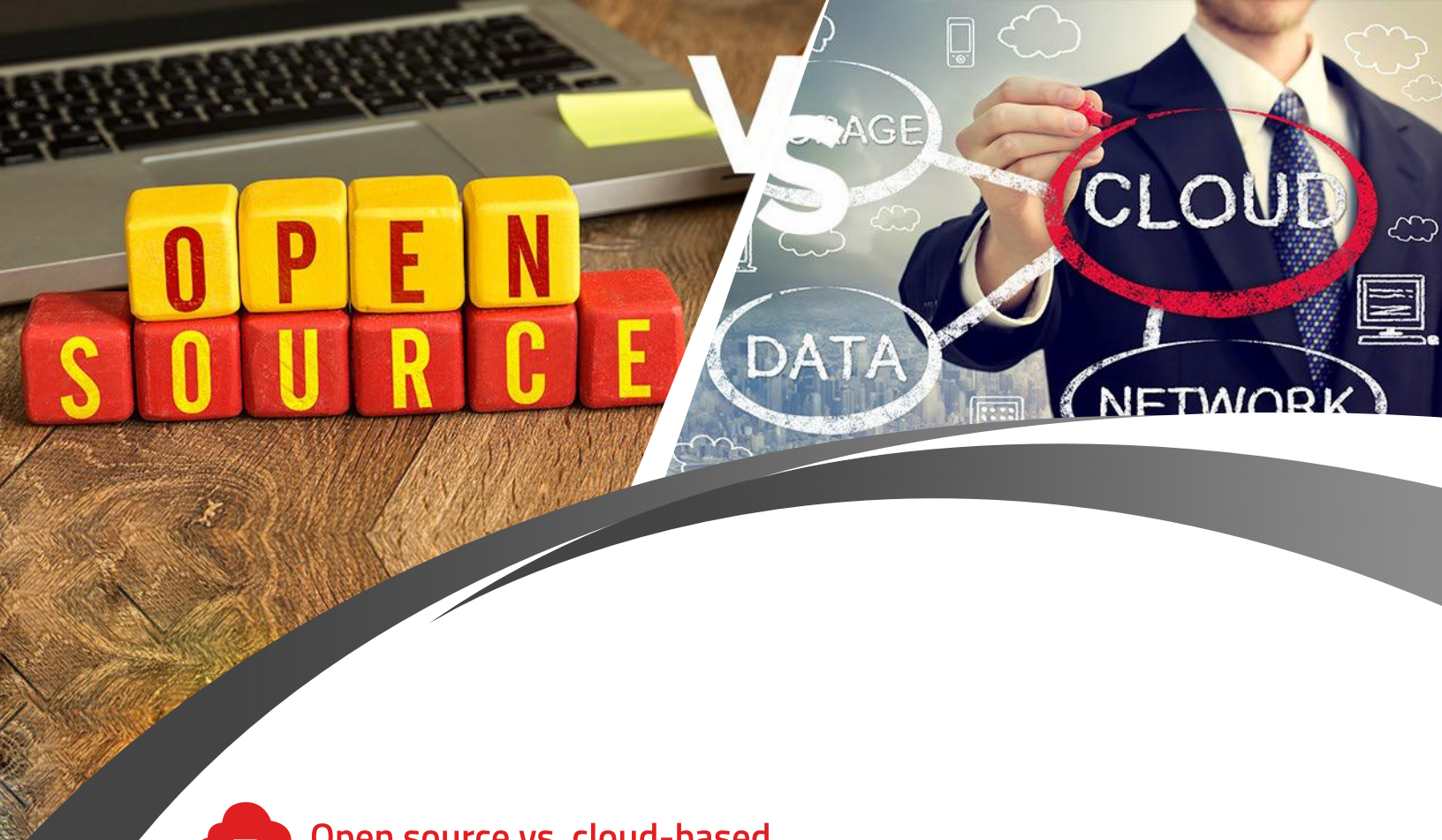
Open source vs. cloud-based

It can be common to assume that closed-source software offers better security than the one with open source. It is because the free availability of open-source codes can prompt some developers to find vulnerabilities. However, it is far from true. Security measures can be complex and go far beyond the application having an open or closed source.

In open-source codes, a large number of developers can extensively review and test them to improve the overall security. Hiding source codes can give a false sense of security instead. Developers might not get that learning curve and write less secure codes.

Four Benefits of Using an Open-Source CMS Like Drupal

Cost-efficiency

Community support

Flexibility and freedom

Open source vs. cloud-based

How Does Drupal Function

Drupal is an ideal CMS platform that can power a range of web assets. You can use it for creating interactive websites where you can leverage features like custom JavaScript and multi-step forms. When it comes to intranets, you can create custom workflows and list company-specific content.

Drupal is also ideal for corporate websites and marketing portals, where SEO remains one of the focus areas. You can get feature-rich landing pages that also allow seamless tracking of analytics regarding user behavior. So, what makes Drupal an ideal choice for these web platforms?

Most websites today have similar features. There will be a navigation menu, content lists, headers with logos, customized URLs, and footers with contact information. Similarly, there are differences as well among websites. The content structure and customization usually distinguish two websites.

7 out of 10 leading educational institutions use the Drupal CMS.

Drupal is beneficial for websites that require shared features. There are several out-of-the-box functionalities in this aspect. They are a flexible navigation system, content listings, contact forms, taxonomy for organizing content, WYSIWYG editor, content authoring experience, user management, responsive design, and much more. The flexibility of the platform also makes it easy to customize the various aspects of your website.

Here are some of the common elements of Drupal you should know.

Modules
Functionalities that you can add to a Drupal website

Nodes
Piece of content

Themes
Showcase the feel, layout, and look of the website

Blocks
Display content, menu, form, lists that are available on the page

Vocabulary
Allows categorization of your content

Content types
Act as a template for content
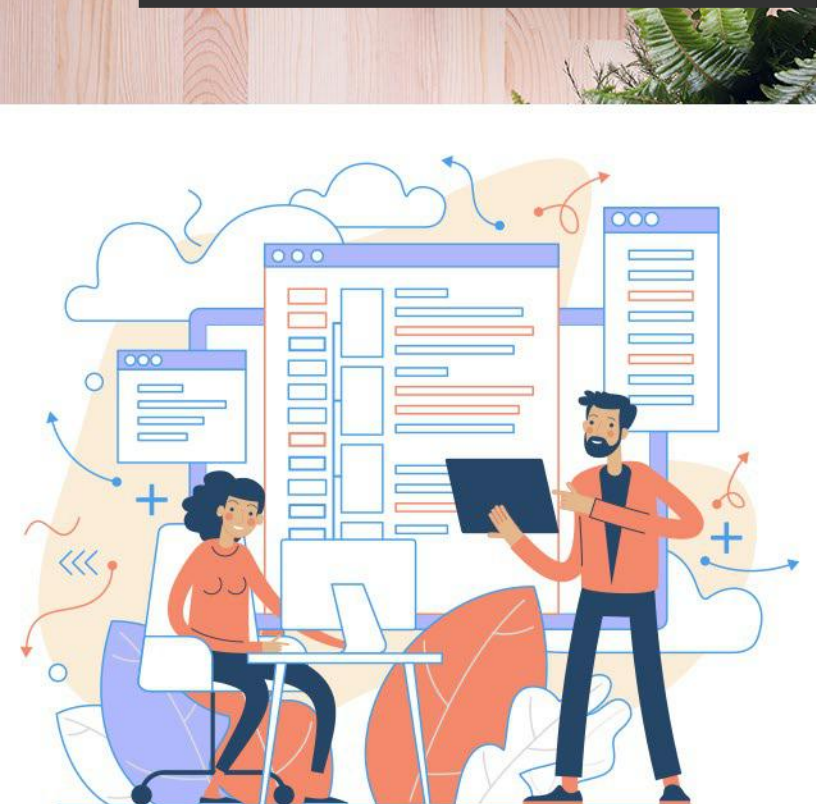
Advantages of Using Drupal CMS for Your Website

The popularity of Drupal has skyrocketed over the years. Businesses today use the CMS for a variety of reasons. Here are some advantages offered by the Drupal platform.

Scalability with minimum downtime

Drupal supports seamless content growth without any hassles. Even if your website has large-scale traffic, you can keep it up and running with Drupal. Industry-leading websites like nbcolympics.com and grammy.com are a testimony to the worth of Drupal. The platform is thus ideal for websites that experience regular or occasional traffic spikes.

Open-source community

As it is an open-source CMS, the platform has a thriving community of developers. The community offers free learning resources, extensive documentation, and exchange of ideas through forums. The abundance of available resources and technical support makes Drupal a preferred choice.

Security

Any software or technology platform should offer reliable security measures. Drupal has a secure framework that offers good resistance to online vulnerabilities. The developer community tests the platform against robust standards that ensure reliability. In case of security issues, the community takes proactive steps to deliver patches and fixes.

Customization

The platform offers excellent customization features that you can use to make your website interactive. There are more than 16,000 plug-ins and modules on offer. The cross-platform flexibility, social media options, and SEO benefits enable smooth user experiences. The flexible content architecture also allows you to give an exciting twist to your content presentation.

SEO-friendliness

You can use the platform to add metadata and SEO-friendly URLs, and custom page titles. These help in optimizing the page content, which leads to a growth in organic traffic. You can make your website crawlable by search engines and streamline it for improved rankings. These measures augur well for your website in today's competitive digital landscape.

Content authoring

The intuitive tools of Drupal for content creation give website owners the flexibility to display content based on their preferences. The customizable features like WYSIWYG editor, in-place authoring, and quick content revisions work well in content management. Editors can create and edit the content on the go. It is also possible for publishers to manage editorial workflows.

Mobile-first focus

Drupal can integrate a range of applications to make content more comprehensive. The platform uses REST APIs that you can use to connect with other apps and sites. It will help you in establishing a presence across devices. The focus on API enables you to share Drupal content on other platforms.

Integrated digital apps

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Advantages of Using Drupal CMS for Your Website

How Drupal Has Emerged as a Preferred Option for Businesses

Drupal today finds its use in several large-scale corporate and non-profit websites. The platform has managed to earn this trust for a variety of reasons. One of the prominent ones being the open-source community that offers unhindered support and timely updates. Drupal's security team keeps the platform safe by identifying and fixing vulnerabilities before they blow out of proportion.

The community keeps up with regular initiatives to keep the platform innovative and meaningful for everyone. Drupal's modules help in extending the functionality of the CMS to users for free. Every module released by the community goes through rigorous tests to ensure only the quality ones come out in public.

It is one of the aspects that make Drupal unique. In other open-source communities, codes can be malicious or might not come for free. When you use get modules released by the platform, you are actually benefiting from all the efforts put in by expert developers from around the world.

> Drupal holds around **2%** of the CMS market share.

The platform is ideal for medium-to-large-sized websites that have ambitious plans to scale in the future. This doesn't mean that smaller websites aren't suited for Drupal. The point is that the platform suits larger content loads and overheads that usually come in such arrangements. Enterprise-level applications can benefit immensely from Drupal.

You can use the platform to store, manage, and deliver a large amount of content. A website that frequently publishes content will find Drupal much beneficial. Users can use the admin interface to create custom management tools that simplify publishing tasks. There can be several users, each having a defined role. Admins can also fine-tune permissions without slowing down the content creation process.

5 Best Examples of Websites Using Drupal

Drupal finds its use in some of the top-most websites from around the world. Here are five prominent examples.
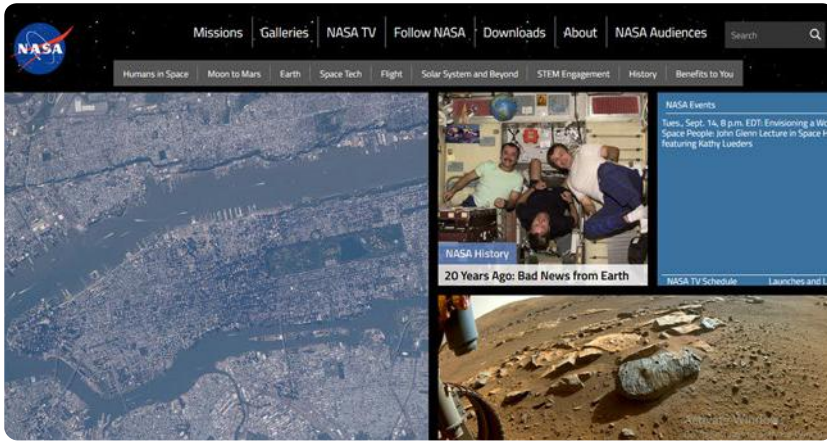
1. NASA

This US-based civilian space program and aerospace research website hosts a huge repository of information. Users can access details of past and present space missions, HD photos and videos, and links to learning resources. The resources are ideal for users interested in knowing more about the subject. NASA's website is an example of a stunning user interface that delivers the best viewing experience.

2. ABS-CBN News

This Philippines-based news agency is the division of the ABS-CBN Corporation. The Drupal-powered website allows them to present news on a real-time basis. Their website also connects with different social media channels and enables user discussion through a secure login system. Visitors can read the latest news stories and engage in discussion around them.

3. The Australian Government

The website is an extensive resource for citizens from various walks of life. There are more than 3000 unique pages that cover information on wide-ranging topics. The website also links to other social media and local news channels. It is an excellent example of how Drupal enables the aesthetic presentation of information to users.

4. The Emmy Awards

The Emmy Awards website remains heavily loaded with content. However, it is still quite seamless in presentation. The user experience is just what you would expect from a top-notch website. Users can expect engaging digital experiences that remain memorable. The selection of their theme is one of the strong points of the website.

5. NCAA

The National Collegiate Athletic Association regulates athletics for 1281 institutions in the US. They also host conferences and manage associated organizations across the country. The website has a steady mix of sports-related information and sales. They sell the team merchandise hosted on a secondary website shopncaasports.com. It makes for an excellent example of a Drupal website with a steady mix of content and e-commerce functionality.
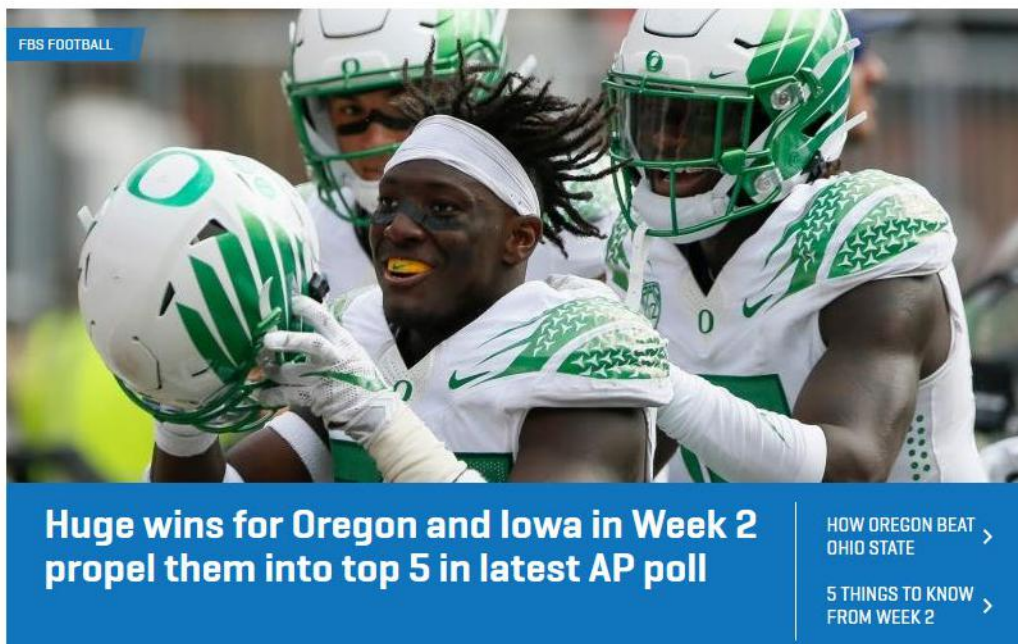
Conclusion

Businesses using Drupal get a highly customizable platform that aids the creation of an efficient content management tool. Besides content management, the platform is also ideal for scaling e-commerce business and marketing products and services. You can leverage these capabilities of the platform to manage your website content seamlessly.

It will also help you build a system to offer personalized experiences to establish a better connection with your website's visitors. The possibilities of customizing your website and delivering improved experiences are plenty when you have Drupal onboard. No matter what your vision is, the development team can help you make it a reality.

Businesses worldwide, including the Fortune 500 companies, are using Drupal for their websites. They are taking advantage of superior integration tools to publish and deliver content. The versatile features, structured content architecture, and modularity help make the platform desirable for businesses of all sorts.

All of these benefits ultimately translate into improving the online image of the business and attract better customers. The tailor-made solutions of Drupal help in this aspect. Offering seamless digital experiences that delight users is no longer a distant dream with Drupal.

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