FORRIT

Web O.No

Your business' bleak online future and how to avoid it

Executive Summary -

Peter Proud, Founder and CEO, Forrit

Tech experts and marketeers worldwide are laser-focused on their digital future, acutely aware of the risk of falling behind. New technologies are promising to open up access to innovations that will change the nature of the World Wide Web as we know it.

Consequently, businesses are prioritising discussions around developments such as artificial intelligence (AI), the metaverse and Web 3.0, and the potential impact on their digital presence. However, while the excitement around the transformative potential is palpable, it may also be premature, without the appropriate web foundations in place.

The current reality is that the internet is at a critical juncture. The web platforms relied upon by many of the largest and most regulated enterprises are simply not fit for purpose. Years of stacking and patching multiple content management systems (CMS) to desperately keep pace with digitalisation, have led to many enterprises losing control of their digital estate.

Commonly, enterprises rely on legacy CMS and open source platforms for their websites. As do many prominent, defacto CMS platform providers to enable content creation and management. However, these systems unwittingly expose providers and users to security vulnerabilities.

The impact of which, is potentially dangerous content lurking in forgotten corners of websites, inaccessible web pages, an impractical user experience (UX), siloed architectures preventing shared data, and insecure systems that compromise business integrity.

The future of the internet is in jeopardy and without remediation today, we can forget about a stable, secure or functional web tomorrow, let alone the tech innovations we're so excited to benefit from.

To remain ahead of this impending instability, there is an urgent need for businesses to re-evaluate their digital foundations. Using composable architecture enables a flexible approach to website design and development, providing a modern solution to a modern problem.

Composable web platforms support enterprises to build scalable, adaptable and resilient systems that evolve with changing business needs, and crucially, with important advancements in technology.

Without streamlining current disjointed systems, the next generation of digital innovation will be almost impossible to implement.

Say goodbye to Web 3.0; if we don't act now, we are heading for Web O.No.

Contents

What is Web O.No?

With the internet spiralling out of control, we are heading towards what Forrit terms **Web O.No** - complete loss of control of the web and the forfeit of user trust.

Insights from industry experts

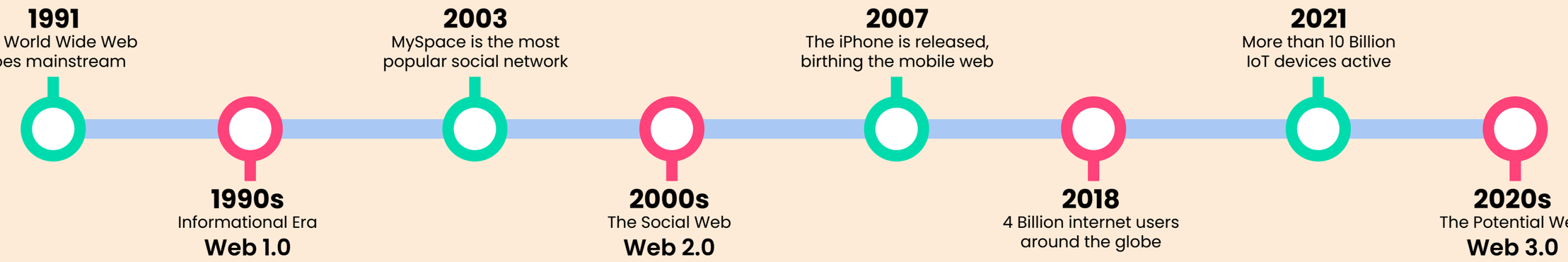
To avoid the Web O.No doomsday scenario, we have engaged with experts across some of the most heavily regulated industries - financial services, utilities and the legal sector. We surveyed the people closest to the company website and the platform it runs on - the tech and marketing decision makers. Marketing teams play a key role in content ideation, generation and management.

While IT departments are responsible for the implementation, security and maintenance of the CMS. Our research uncovers the critical issues faced by these teams in trying to manage and update proliferating insecure websites while maintaining customer trust and keeping data safe. This report reveals how these key decision makers feel about the state of their web assets.

If business leaders fail to address their web management platforms and their associated issues urgently, they risk losing control of their sites and inevitably, the opportunity to capitalise on future web innovations that will set them apart from the competition.

This report aims to empower enterprises to embrace composable web architecture that cuts through the mess, providing a clear pathway to the future - whether that's the metaverse, Web 3.0, AI, or any other pioneering technology advancement yet to be defined.

Reality check: Future of the web



Since the 1990s, we have moved through several iterations of the web. From the informational era (Web 1.0) of static websites, limited interactivity and dial-up connections - where the internet was designed to disseminate information through the birth of search engines. Fast forward to Web 2.0, the social web, in the mid-2000s that introduced us to dynamic and interactive content, rich internet applications, social media and collaborative user-generated content.

Each development has significantly advanced our ability to connect, and the third generation of the web is no different. Web 3.0 is anticipated to provide greater intelligence, automation and personalisation capabilities. This remaking of the internet leans on blockchain technologies to decentralise control over how people communicate and consume assets for a more neutral net, exponentially improving the value proposition for content creation.

It is understandable that marketing and IT leaders are excited by the potential of innovations such as Web 3.0 and the metaverse and the impact these can have on their online presence and bottom line. Disappointingly, however, the current state of their web platforms hinders their ability to plan and prepare for this future. Security flaws, vulnerabilities with open source web management systems, ungoverned websites, and multiple layers of legacy CMS systems have ultimately led to the web becoming undone.

Our survey has found that nearly 90% of marketing and tech experts across the financial services, utilities and legal sectors are optimistic about the potential of innovations such as Web 3.0, and the metaverse to revolutionise the way we interact with the web.

Yet, 87% believe these innovations could be delayed or stunted by the current state of the internet. Despite the excitement for future potential, astoundingly, all of the respondents revealed that they do not believe their company website is currently equipped for the next generation of the internet and the technology that comes with it.

This raises the question: **What is causing the disconnect between the direction the internet is heading and businesses' ability to keep pace?**

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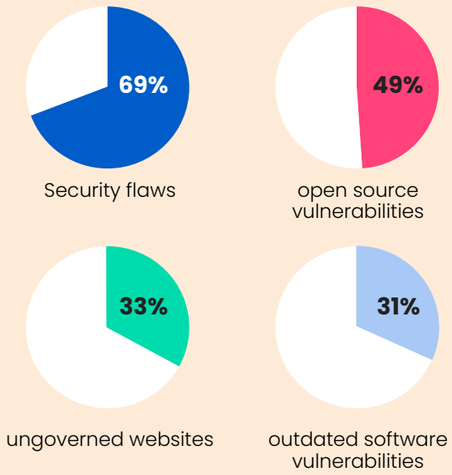
The current state of the internet

Of the 500 professionals surveyed, all unanimously agree that the internet today is a mess. Security flaws (69%), open source vulnerabilities (49%), ungoverned websites (33%), and multiple layers of legacy or outdated software (31%) have caused unprecedented disruption for enterprises focused on delivering trusted information.

Disruption for enterprises



While respondents might be optimistic about the prospect of Web 3.0, each of these vulnerabilities edges us dangerously closer to Web O.No. To avoid this damning reality, and make the most of present and future opportunities, we must first examine where we have gone wrong.

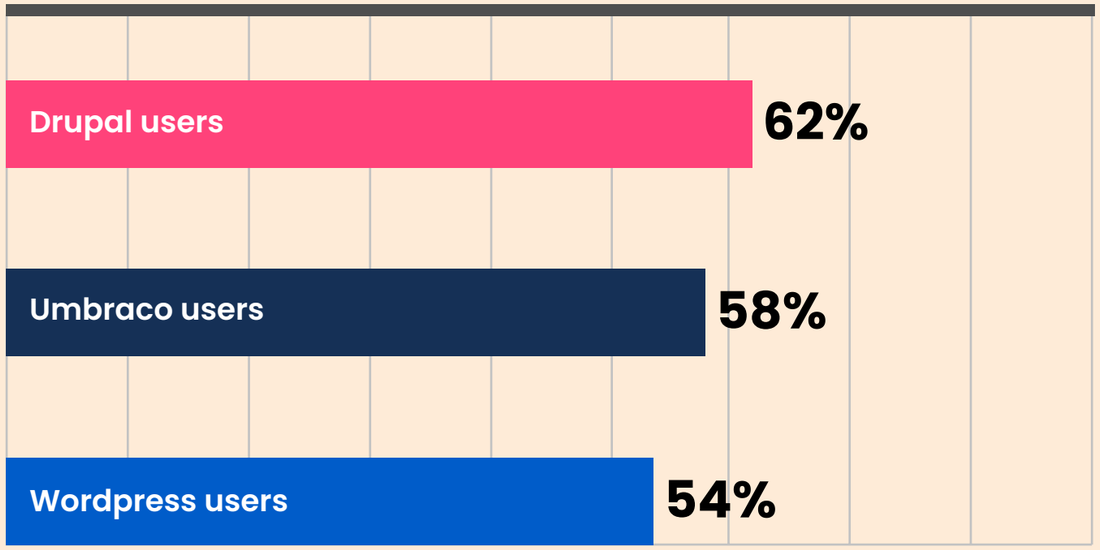
Security you control

Protecting our internet presence has become more important as the world moves online. An insecure web leaves brands, and, therefore, its customers, open to threat. It is without question that creating an exceptional customer experience relies on implementing powerful security controls, particularly for heavily regulated sectors like finance, utilities and legal that are under increasing risk of attack. Enterprises operating within this space are therefore duty bound to protect the customers that interact with their business, by making security the cornerstone of customer safety, loyalty and trust.

Despite the intrinsic role of security in underpinning the customer experience across these industries, an astonishing 57% of respondents admit to having security flaws in the technology behind their websites. **Unsurprisingly, over 4 in 5 (84%) agree that if customers discovered these security flaws, they would lose trust in the brand.**

Security vulnerabilities were most prevalent among those who run their websites on open source systems. We

Businesses with security flaws in their websites:



consulted businesses that rely on some of the most common open source CMS platforms (WordPress, Umbraco, Drupal), and the majority admitted to security flaws within their websites. One of the major problems with open source CMS, is the reliance on plug-ins. Created by multiple unknown third-party developers, using shared source code, plug-ins create vulnerabilities and leave brands open to hackers.

Remarkably, 86% of respondents are apprised of the risks associated with third-party plug-ins within open source platforms. However, this doesn't prevent the software from being the defacto standard, even among the most heavily regulated industries. Nearly half of open source users (43%) are actively concerned about these risks, a percentage that increases to 51% for WordPress users. Opting instead for a closed-source composable CMS safeguards brands while enabling the flexibility, support and innovation promised by plug-ins.

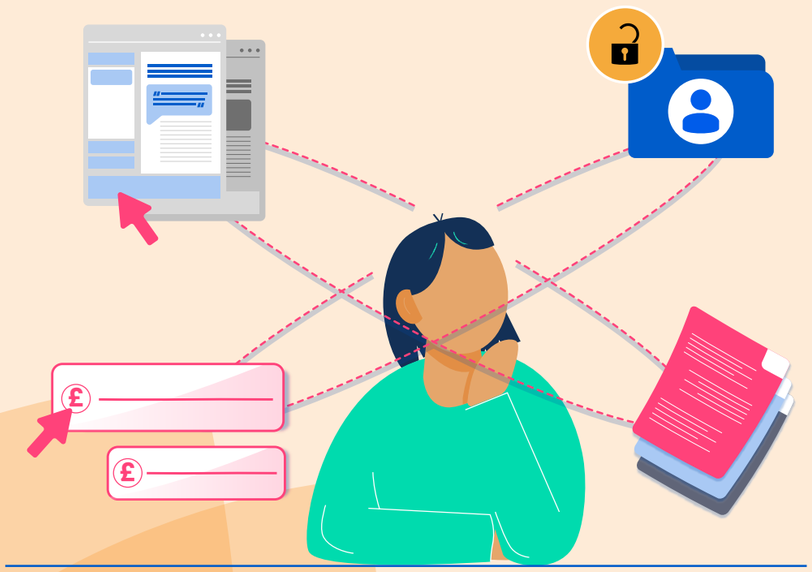
Do more, with less: The problem with multiple CMSs

A further issue contributing to website security vulnerabilities, is the practice of working across multiple CMSs. Research has shown that 88% enterprises operate more than one CMS. By default, managing multiple CMSs translates to multiple operators, multiple providers and ultimately, multiple weak points in the architecture.

Beyond cyber vulnerabilities, running multiple, siloed content management systems reduces the speed of operations, compromising the performance of the web estate and, subsequently, the user experience (UX). Well over one in five (29%) are working with siloed CMS, inhibiting collaboration between website management platforms. Among other issues, this obstructs businesses from building a cohesive brand across local and global websites.

Often, when multiple CMSs are at play, businesses struggle with managing and updating individual systems. Just under a third (32%) of respondents admit to being reliant on outdated, legacy CMS that are unsupported by the software company. Archaic systems negatively impact the flexibility and scalability of websites and inhibit businesses from implementing and benefiting from new innovations, such as AI.

Obsolete technology limits the potential of businesses and of the digital experience it is possible for them to create, , preventing the experts working within these brands from presenting rich, interactive content quickly and effectively.



Governance and Content Chaos

Relying on multiple CMS or legacy systems makes the web's governance a challenge. With CMS sprawl, it becomes harder to ensure compliance and maintain the regulatory standards required to protect customer data and ensure information security, across many platforms. Our research further highlights this concern; just over one in three (34%) say that managing multiple content management platforms means they don't have control of the content on their sites. **Nearly half (47%) are unsure of how many people have access to the site and/or who has the ability to upload content.** Equally, almost the same number of experts (48%) are unable to account for every web page, and, therefore, the breadth of the content across their websites.

Despite respondents working within some of the most heavily regulated industries, a third (33%) say there is no clear or centralised approval process for uploading website content. A number of respondents (22%) from financial services, utilities and the legal sector even admitted that their CMS system leads to them experiencing difficulties with complying to regulatory standards.

This means they are at risk of having dangerous or illegal content lurking on unsupported web pages throughout their website, or even a complete manipulation of their web assets. The result - a heightened risk of outages, dysfunctional interfaces and an inconsistent user experience that could easily damage the website's reputation and brand perception.

Platform-as-a-service (PaaS) solutions allow IT teams to have greater control over their assets. Customers can use this capability to optimise their infrastructures and configure their performance, security, and compliance, such as GDPR, in line with business objectives. In contrast, software-as-a-service (SaaS) CMS providers limit the business' control by retaining their data. The risk is that brands risk losing important company data if a SaaS provider fails.

Security implications are just one consequence of ineffective governance. Without appropriate controls, websites are not only susceptible to obvious compliance violations, but also subsequently miss opportunities for a sustained online presence, growth, and technology innovation. Essentially, the inability to govern effectively signposts a challenging future for every business that relies on the internet.

So what does the current state of the internet mean for the future of the web?

Spiralling towards Web O.No

As the internet continues to spiral out of control, platform outages will become more prevalent, security vulnerabilities will be laid bare with potentially devastating consequences, and the web will be at risk of becoming practically unusable. This is Web O.No.

Widespread adoption of Web 3.0, the metaverse and the aspirational innovations pegged for the future, remain in limbo until we can streamline business web assets and steer clear of Web O.No.

The reality is that there are glaring flaws within our current web. Our research reveals that each and every respondent claims their website suffers with vulnerabilities - from security issues, to governance to poor UX.

There is also a heightened awareness that if customers discover existing vulnerabilities in the technology powering their websites - they would lose trust in the website, and ultimately in the brand.

This concern is palpable and valid. Customer scepticism is at an all time high and this is reflected in their expectations of brands. Consistent delivery of functionality, trust and reliability are core to delivering valuable customer experiences. Without this, customers are willing to walk away from brands.

Our research shows that an unstable internet is already impacting the user experience, with more than one in five (24%) experiencing lacklustre web performance, including outages and 404s. These usability issues will only compound as we edge closer to the precipice of Web O.No.

The opportunity to change course remains possible, and essential, if we are to harness the innovation required for the next generation of the web.

As we edge closer to Web O.No, outages will become more prevalent, security vulnerabilities will be laid bare with potentially devastating consequences and the web will be at risk of becoming practically unusable.

Peter Proud,
Founder and CEO, Forrit

Clearing a path through the mess to avoid Web O.No - with a CMS you control

We are on the verge of a transformative internet age that promises a more intelligent and interconnected web than ever before. However, to harness the multitude of benefits we first need to put the brakes on Web O.No, and quickly.

According to the experts surveyed, composable CMSs may offer the necessary solution. Crucially, **89% of respondents believe adopting composable architecture will empower organisations to future proof their digital estate.**

Unlike traditional non-composable CMSs, which often lock organisations into rigid structures, composable platforms offer flexibility and adaptability. With modular components, organisations can easily adjust their digital infrastructure to meet evolving needs, without the risk of outages. Closed source composable CMSs enable organisations to enjoy the benefits of agility and innovation without compromising on data integrity and confidentiality.

By leveraging the power of cloud computing and composable architecture, cloud-based composable CMSs can redefine the way website content is managed, delivered and scaled for a seamless and flexible solution to digital experiences.

With a composable CMS, businesses can streamline their migration process, expediting the transition from legacy systems to a progressive infrastructure. Leveraging efficient migration tools can facilitate a seamless transfer of content that minimises the downtime usually associated with the migration process. This 'shift and lift' approach to migration increases efficiency which results in an accelerated time-to- market for websites and operational expenditure (OPEX) savings for organisations.

Modular architecture is at the heart of best-in-breed composable, content management systems based on PaaS environments. Interchangeable modules revolutionise the way websites can be built and managed by fostering agility and innovation. Organisations can quickly adapt to changing needs and easily integrate new technology and functionalities. Empowering users with the ability to customise, and scale to stay ahead in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

A low code, headless CMS removes the need for developers to create and manage content. Without the need for extensive coding or front-end development, users can intuitively design and publish content regardless of technical knowledge, untangling the complexity of web design and freeing up time and resources to add value where organisations need it most. For marketing professionals, a highly-composable CMS also provides an intuitive user interface (UI) which supports easy collaboration and simplified workflows for all team members. A significant development, as 46% of marketers and IT experts admit their current web management platform is limiting their ability to work efficiently, a figure that rises to 53% for WordPress users. Composable CMSs address collaboration bottlenecks by enabling teams, regardless of size, to get the most out of their content.

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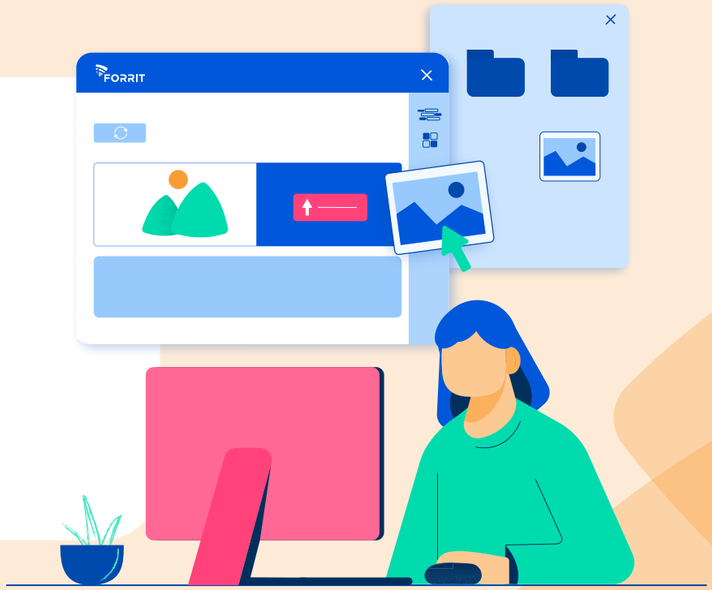

Composable CMS and AI

Critically, composable CMSs enable organisations to embrace other advancements, such as AI, by facilitating effortless adoption into their websites.

Artificial intelligence has been pitted to play a profound role in our communications and digital assets. AI will contribute significantly to Web 3.0, activating enhanced user experiences and automation. Its importance is revered, with 85% of respondents convinced that AI adoption will radically transform their online presence in myriad ways.

AI-powered tools help teams work together more efficiently and allow marketers to streamline content creation. Features like version control, content staging and workflow automation support real-time editing

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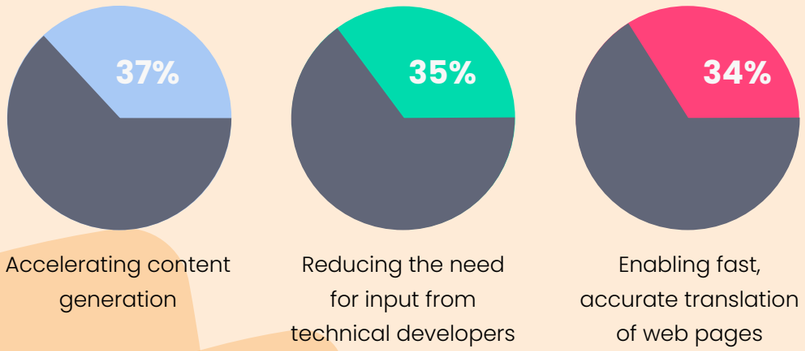
and create smoother collaboration between content creators, editors and stakeholders. By automating features like asset tagging, for quick categorisation and digital asset retrieval, AI can enhance site navigation for an improved UX.

Additionally, AI can help businesses connect with customers in multiple regions, a business imperative today. However, 49%[1] of companies communicating across multiple territories, avoid localising content on websites because their CMS doesn't support it. Timely localisation is a necessity for cross-border communication. Using an Azure-native CMS adds accuracy and speed to translations for businesses expanding into new territories, to help marketers across highly regulated industries communicate effectively across borders.

The current state of the web is thwarting today's business efforts - inhibiting their ability to harness progressive AI capabilities. Despite the clear benefits of AI to revolutionise business, 73% of respondents perceive barriers to AI adoption in their enterprise due to limitations of their CMS. User-friendly, composable CMSs with better security, flexibility and new opportunities for scalability, will pave the way towards a new era of web management that reduces the need for technical developers, accelerates content generation and enables fast, and accurate website translation.

If both marketing experts and tech decision makers, who are directly involved with the management and maintenance of the CMS, are aware that moving to a composable solution would transform their online presence, what's holding them back?

AI adoption would radically transform businesses' online presence by:

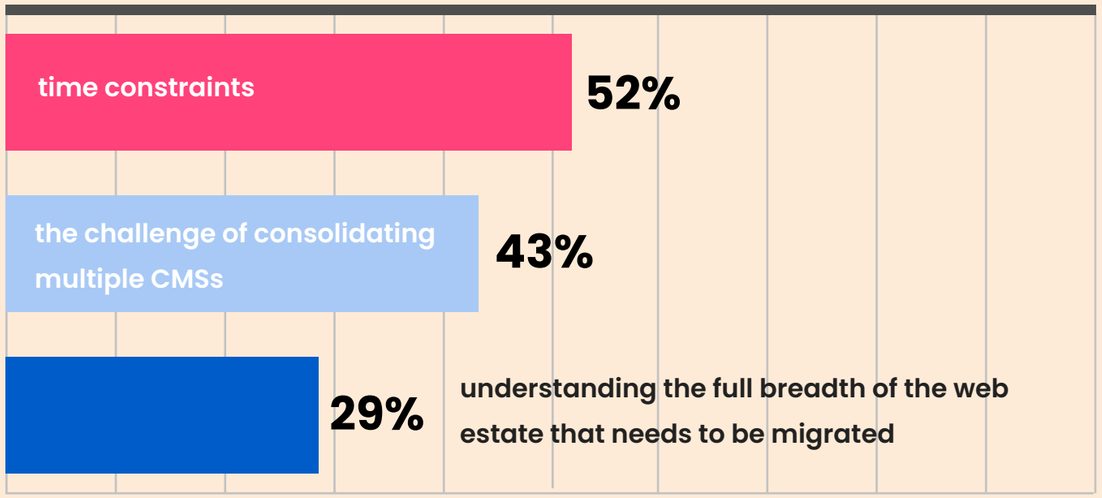


"AI has the capabilities to streamline and automate multiple business needs. For organisations, choosing a CMS that enables your best work is invaluable. At Forrit, we believe in deploying Cloud Services that make life easier for our experts. Hence, our CMS is underlined by Microsoft Azure which is stacked with adaptable AI tools to manage digital assets where and when it's needed. AI continues to simplify typically convoluted processes for an effective web management system that supports digital advancements.

- Gary Roberts, CRO, Forrit.

1. Forrit (2023). The Content Management System Market in 2023: What Marketers in Financial Services really think. Forrit Whitepaper, 19. https://27069297.fs1.hubspotusercontent-eu1.net/hubfs/27069297/Forrit%20whitepaper.pdf

Key CMS migration fears for businesses:



Migration fears rooted in time constraints, and complex multilayered CMSs are proving to be a deterrent for many. Over half (52%) of respondents cite time constraints as a barrier to migration. While 43% aren't prepared to undertake the challenge of consolidating multiple CMSs into one overarching platform.

Layering multiple CMSs on top of one another creates a sprawling website estate that IT teams and marketers just can't manage. Blindspots in their web presence, means teams are unaware of the breadth of the CMSs that require migration.

Just under a third of respondents lack understanding of the full breadth of their web estate that requires migration, proving a barrier to change. Migration doesn't have to be complicated or time-consuming. Using a 'lift and shift' approach, IT teams can work with delivery teams, in an agile manner, to migrate to a composable platform that doesn't require one website to close until another is 'live'. Using AI to scrape data, delivery teams can migrate existing content to meet business outcomes on demand.

Future-proofing your CMS is the first step towards curating a more sustainable internet that channels advanced technologies for revolutionary change.

Epilogue

We are at a radical crossroads of change. While there is much on the horizon to fuel enthusiasm, many of the innovative, progressive technologies that could transform business, remain out of reach until we address the chaos of our current internet.

The bottleneck of enterprises layering outdated, or vulnerable web management platforms, at a global scale, is unsustainable and damaging. Each company has a role to play in addressing our digital foundations, creating an efficient and safe internet for all.

Composable web architecture is crucial to revolutionising the way we interact with the web, providing a clear pathway through the chaos. Without it, we risk a stunted internet, with disjointed brands ill-equipped to manage the transformative era ahead of us.

Future-proofing businesses depends on laying the right foundations today.

About Forrit

For the last ten years, UK-based content management system provider Forrit has been helping large businesses in highly regulated industries keep their web estate secure, simple to scale, and easy to manage.

Our mission? To allow IT and marketing to manage their digital estate in perfect harmony. Through Forrit's intuitive UI, low code CMS and content management configuration platform (Service Delivery Hub), the CMO and CTO can take joint control of their web estate.

An Azure-native solution, through which businesses can leverage any and all Azure Cloud Services, including AI-powered translation and automated migration, Forrit's CMS is future-proof and can be scaled or de-scaled as needed.

Sound technical? Not at all. Forrit's platform requires no prior Azure knowledge or technical expertise to get everything needed from it. This relieves the strain on the IT team, and the marketing team can create unrivalled digital experiences and manage content with ease.

With enterprise-grade security, Forrit's cloud-native CMS helps businesses simplify their workflows, streamline their marketing efforts and scale at speed, securely.

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Methodology

Censuswide conducted research in March 2024, designed for large-sized international business decision-makers regarding their web estate management challenges.

The sample population for this study comprised 500 UK IT and marketing decision makers globally.

Censuswide abides by and employs members of the Market Research Society, which is based on the ESOMAR principles, and is a member of The British Polling Council.