

The CMS Selection Worksheet

Two CMSs with identical feature lists can produce completely different experiences. This is how to judge fit, not features.

Step 1. Who actually edits, and how technical are they?

The single biggest factor in whether a CMS fits. Match the system to these people, not to a feature list.

Person / role	What they do in the CMS	Codes?

Step 2. The editing test

Your team will spend hundreds of hours in the editor. Test it with the real people who will use it, on a real task, with the vendor NOT driving.

Write and publish a post

An editor did it start to finish without help.

1	2	3	4	5
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Build a landing page

Done without a developer, or clearly not.

1	2	3	4	5
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Change a headline and image

Fast and obvious, or fiddly and slow.

1	2	3	4	5
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Find and edit an old page

The system helped rather than hindered.

1	2	3	4	5
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It felt pleasant, not a fight

Honest gut read from the person who used it.

1	2	3	4	5
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Reading it: This page matters more than any spec sheet. A low score here predicts hundreds of hours of friction that no feature makes up for.

Step 3. Growth check

Where will you be in three years? Pages, sites, markets, channels.

If you will grow, test whether the CMS grows with you. Migrating later is painful.

Step 4. Getting out

How does export work, and what format does your content leave in?

Ask before you commit, not after. Trapped content is lock-in, and lock-in costs you later.

Step 5. Total cost, not licence cost

The sticker price is a fraction of it. Fill the lines the licence hides.

Cost line	Option A	Option B
Licence / subscription		
Implementation		
Training		
Ongoing developer help		
Hosting		
Cost of team slowdown		

The quiet truth. A cheap CMS that needs constant developer help is the expensive one. A pricier CMS your team flies in can be the bargain. Judge the total, over three years, including the hours nobody invoices for.