dotCMS v2.5

dotCMS

SUMMARY

Catalyst

Traditional web content management (WCM) products that provide functionality to develop largely static, information-based websites are fast disappearing. They are being replaced by products that enable organizations to offer website visitors a highly personalized, engaging experience. dotCMS is one of a healthy number of open source WCM vendors that provide cost-effective solutions to organizations. Its solution offers a core WCM system, with social, mobile, and some analytics capabilities, which can be complemented by Google Analytics or Adobe Site Catalyst. Being open source, the community edition can be downloaded for free, although Ovum recommends that organizations consider the paid-for Enterprise edition.

Key findings

- The dotCMS product supports responsive design and 13 cascading style sheet (CSS) frameworks, to deliver content across multiple devices and through multiple channels.
- Organizations are able to run multiple sites, in a multitude of languages, on different servers. Thousands of sites can be hosted using a single instance of dotCMS.
- dotCMS includes a simple visual workflow builder to enable users to build simple and complex workflows.
- Remote publishing supports a variety of publishing architectures out of the box. Push publishing architectures supported include: authoring/delivery; enterprise deployments (stage, QA, and production); remote disaster recovery; geographic load balancing; and multi-server, shared-nothing scalability.
- Open APIs are provided to query, retrieve (XML, JSON), and write content. Support for content management interoperability services (CMIS) allows integration with other content management systems.
- dotCMS includes limited analytics to provide statistics about site visits and some profiling information. However, dotCMS currently does not offer the capability to monitor brand mentions on social media sites.

Ovum recommends

- dotCMS is an ideal solution for organizations that want a cost-effective WCM solution that is highly scalable, with multi-level caching. The Enterprise edition will suit larger organizations that need extended features with support and maintenance.
- The Community version will be attractive for smaller companies and organizations that want an easy-to-use WCM without the "bells and whistles" of the Enterprise edition, and do not need support and maintenance.
- The extent of the capabilities means that organizations that provide mainly information services, and offer no or limited interactive capabilities, will find its functionality too extensive for their requirements.

Value proposition

An organization's corporate website is a business-critical communication channel because it is usually the first port of call for customers, partners, suppliers, and stakeholders looking for information relating to products, services, and company news. There is therefore a clear requirement for the content and information presented by corporate websites to be dynamic, relevant, and accurate. dotCMS, a provider of open source, Java/J2EE WCM solutions, aims to offer organizations a cost-effective open-standards-based WCM system that can be used by enterprise web content authors. The Community Edition (licensed under GPL 3.0) of dotCMS offers a free route to high-functionality WCM. Commercial versions of dotCMS enable organizations to choose between in-house or cloud-based deployments.

The product was designed with simplicity, flexibility, and usability as its core themes. dotCMS is targeted at the business-user base across functional departments and does not require content authors or website managers to have knowledge of HTML or scripting languages, even though these facilities are fully supported for advanced users or website developers. dotCMS incorporates a WYSIWYG editor that enables content authors across the organization to create, edit, and modify content.

SOLUTION ANALYSIS

Functionality

dotCMS is a multi-platform WCM solution that can be deployed as an on-premise solution or as fully managed software-as-a-service (SaaS) using the Amazon Web Services (AWS) cloud. Although the SaaS version is used by many large enterprises, Ovum believes that smaller companies that would struggle to implement an on-premise solution will also be attracted by the ease-of-deployment of a fully hosted service.

A single multi-tenant instance of dotCMS can run thousands of sites in multiple languages, including micro-sites and mega-sites. Content, templates, and assets can be shared across sites if required; and new sites can be developed quickly by copying an existing site, editing it, and then launching the new site. This capability is particularly suited to multinational enterprises that operate across multiple geographies and that need to maintain the same branding across all sites, while allowing local content to be produced.

Figure 1: dotCMS content engine
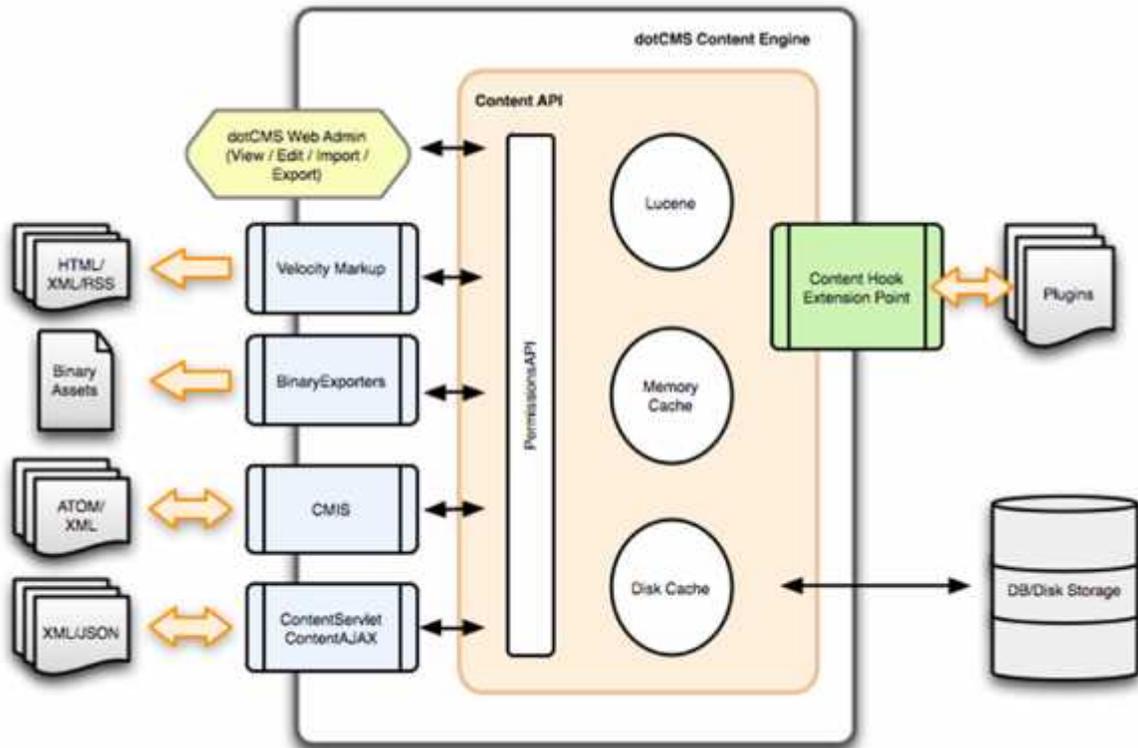
Source: dotCMS

dotCMS uses a responsive design and supports 13 CSS frameworks including Twitter Bootstrap, Foundation, and Unsemantic. Custom themes can be developed that use native mobile device capabilities, allowing content to be automatically rendered to the size of the screen of the device on which it will be displayed. Content can be previewed to see how it will look on each device. dotCMS can make use of device capabilities, such as geo-location services, which are based on a standards-based database of device attributes (Wireless Universal Resource File [WURFL]). The product ships with JQuery Mobile Site, which allows users to deliver mobile apps for all popular mobile device platforms.

Push publishing provides a flexible remote publishing platform, which supports any publishing architecture. It uses browser-based administration that allows administrators to manage remote servers and publishing processes from a single user interface. Anything from a single piece of content to an entire website can be published. Content changes can be synchronized between servers in any direction, meaning that changes only need to be made once and can be pushed out to all sites. Spring web apps and OSGi plug-ins can be remotely published.

dotCMS includes a GUI-based workflow engine that allows workflows to be built to move content through the content lifecycle. A workflow may be a simple drafting, reviewing, revising, approving, publishing, and archiving process or it can be a more complex workflow with many more steps. Publication and retirement can be scheduled and emails can be sent to notify users of a pending task. Workflow tasks are permission-based, which allows organizations to limit who can do what in a process.

ElasticSearch (based on Lucene) provides a distributed search capability, with every item on the website indexed and searchable. It also includes basic analytics that provides information such as the number of hits on each page, the most and least popular pages, and the navigation of visitors through the site, allowing marketers to personalize content. However, for more complex analytics requirements, dotCMS integrates with Google Analytics and Adobe Site Catalyst.

dotCMS has some social capabilities. Content can easily be published to social channels including Twitter and Facebook through a single click. Content can also be pushed to social network sites using workflows. However, a weakness, in Ovum's opinion, is the lack of functionality to crawl social network sites for brand mentions, which means that organizations will need a separate product for performing sentiment analysis of conversations around the brand. However, dotCMS is not the only vendor not to provide this capability, as it is one of the more advanced social functions, and is not the first social feature that most WCM vendors add to their portfolios.

Go-to-market strategy

This WCM offering is suited to general use and is already used in a variety of industries, including the healthcare, manufacturing, financial services, higher education, professional services, and pharmaceutical sectors. According to the vendor, the dotCMS product is particularly applicable to marketing departments that need to provide publishers and content contributors with a unified web-authoring tool that integrates with third-party systems and data repositories. A clear pointer to the target market of this offering are the dotCMS "accelerators" that have been developed for public-sector information sites, higher education, and associations (".org" groups).

According to dotCMS, the key market opportunity for dotCMS is linked with an organization's need to eliminate the typical bottlenecks that occur in publishing content to the web. Like other WCM solutions on the market, dotCMS aims to address this by targeting the average business user or knowledge worker who needs to author and/or publish web content. The dotCMS product delivers strong functionality without being overly complex, making good use of open source technology and adhering to established and emerging web standards.

The company's route to market is a mix of both direct and accredited partner-based sales. Direct sales are predominantly within the US and account for almost 70% of revenues. The remaining 30% comes from accredited partners that sell dotCMS outside of the US.

Deployment

With respect to implementation timeframes and resources required during implementation, dotCMS says an evaluation/pilot project or small-scale implementation of dotCMS has a deployment timeframe of about 30 days and requires three full-time equivalents with knowledge of HTML/CSS, JavaScript, Velocity, and project management.

A midsized implementation/departmental rollout has a deployment timeframe of approximately 90 days and requires four full-time equivalents with the same knowledge set mentioned for the small-scale implementation.

A large-scale deployment would take about six months and require six full-time equivalents with knowledge of networking in addition to the base knowledge set.

Two technical-support packages are available for organizations purchasing the commercial edition of dotCMS.

The Economy Basic Support package entitles the customer to twenty hours of phone/online support, with an SLA that guarantees a response within eight hours during business hours (9am to 6pm EST or GMT +1 hour).

The Performance Support package entitles the customer to twenty hours of phone/online support, with an SLA that guarantees a response within four hours during business hours (9am to 6pm EST or GMT +1 hour), as well as 24x7 Critical Care Support for uptime.

DATA SHEET

Key facts about the solution

Table 1: dotCMS data sheet

Product name	dotCMS	**Product classification**	Content management
Version number	2.5	**Release date**	September 2013
Industries covered	All	**Geographies covered**	All
Relevant company sizes	Any	**Platforms supported**	Windows, Linux, Solaris, AIX
Languages supported	English, Spanish, Italian, French, German, Dutch, Russian, and Chinese	**Licensing options**	Community Edition GPL 3.0, Enterprise Edition dotCMS Open License
Deployment options	On-premise, on-premise managed, SaaS	**Route(s) to market**	Direct and partners
URL	www.dotcms.com	**Company headquarters**	Miami, Florida, US
European headquarters	Eindhoven, The Netherlands	**North America headquarters**	As above
Asia-Pacific headquarters	N/A		

Source: Ovum

APPENDIX

Methodology

Ovum Technology Audits are independent product reviews carried out using Ovum's evaluation model for the relevant technology area, supported by conversations with vendors, users, and service providers of the solution concerned, and in-depth secondary research.

Further reading

Web Content Management 2012/2013 (Technology Evaluation Report), IT014-002685 (January 2013)

Author

Sue Clarke, Senior Analyst, Software – Information Management

sue.clarke@ovum.com

Ovum Consulting

We hope that this analysis will help you make informed and imaginative business decisions. If you have further requirements, Ovum's consulting team may be able to help you. For more information about Ovum's consulting capabilities, please contact us directly at consulting@ovum.com.

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