

- Competitive Analysis -

Microsoft Content Management Server Beta Version 2002

Background

In April 2001, Microsoft acquired, for a sum of \$36M, a company called nCompass Labs with its very basic Web content management product - Resolution, version 4.0. Shortly after, Microsoft renamed the product to Microsoft Content Management Server (henceforth MS CMS), version 2001.

General

MS CMS is a very basic web content management (WCM) tool. It does not address Enterprise Content Management (ECM) needs and lacks some fundamental content management functionalities (e.g. advanced personalization, true syndication and aggregation). It enjoys the reputation for being relatively cheap and easy to deploy. Microsoft targets this product to small to mid-market departmental Website deployments with the expressed purpose of taking on Interwoven, Documentum and such.

What's new in the 2002 Beta version?

In July 2002, Microsoft released beta version 2002 of the product. The new beta version fixes many problems and inabilities of the previous version (e.g. XML-based content support) but does not present significant enhancements in some of the problematic aspects of the product (e.g. scalability, content model). The commercial version is expected to be shipped at the end of the year.

The main enhancements in the new version are: Integration with other Microsoft products (other .Net Enterprise servers, MS Office, Visual Studio .Net), support for the .Net framework, support for XML-based content, basic support for Web Services. **Version 2002 enhancements and changes are highlighted in red in the Comparison Table.**

Warning

Be cautious: some of what is promised by the Microsoft marketing literature is partially implemented in reality. Check carefully what is standing behind Microsoft's definitions and marketing words (e.g. in marketing material, the terms "caching" and "components" are frequently used but represent totally different notions).

Major Weaknesses

- One platform support only.
- Poor scalability
- Lack of fundamental content management functionalities
 - No robust personalization
 - No native content aggregation & syndication
 - No comprehensive data modeling and no support for content componentization
 - No caching mechanism

Comparison Table

| Category | Feature | MS CMS 2002 | Other CM Product |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|------------------|
| Business | | | |
| | List price | \$42,999 US per processor | |
| | Average selling price | \$70,000 US | |
| | Live customers | 125++ (nCompass customers prior to acquisition) | |
| Technology & Architecture | | | |
| Platform Support | Operating system support | Microsoft Windows 2000 (previous NT support was eliminated) | |
| | Database support | Microsoft SQL Server 2000 (nCompass used to support also Oracle, but option was eliminated by MS) | |
| | Web/Application server support | Microsoft IIS (.Net ASP) | |
| | Portability | None | |
| Standards support | | Support all standards as long as they are Microsoft's standards | |
| Development Environment | Development framework | .Net | |
| | Development Tool | Visual Studio .Net tool set | |
| | Source Language Support | ActiveX, C++, Visual Basic, C | |
| Extensibility | APIs | COM API. | |
| | Application Integration | To integrate backend systems, the called application must have COM API (almost no non-Microsoft applications have COM API). In version 2002 Web Services support was also incorporated | |
| | Integration with Commercial Packages | No ready plugs. Integration is complicated since no enterprise commercial package (e.g. SAP, JDEdwards, Oracle Apps) maintain COM API or is Web Services enabled yet. Integration exists with MS Commerce Server. | |
| | B2B Integration | No catalog abilities. Basic Web Services support exists. Integration with BizTalk Server incorporated. | |
| Distributed Architecture | Distributed deployment | Cannot use database clustering. Can work with Network Load Balancing software (included in Windows 2000 advanced server). | |
| | Distributed publishing | Only static support using file-based publishing (staging content to a remote site to be served as a static file-based web site). | |
| Performance | Resource Consumption | Highly resource consuming due to no caching support & no component architecture. | |
| | Response time | Problematic. Since no caching, let alone component caching, each user request triggers re-processing & re-delivery of all presentation & | |

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|---|---|--|--|
| | | content objects. | |
| Scalability | Ability to scale | Poor. Since it is totally Windows based, relies on addition of hardware to scale but since no database clustering is feasible, dynamic site scaling is very limited. Claims to scale using the Network Load Balancing software (included in Windows 2000 advanced server) which is a very poor option and cannot serve heavily trafficked sites. | |
| | Scalability ratio | Poor one-server scalability due to no portability, no caching and limited distributed deployment. | |
| Adaptive Architecture | | No support | |
| | Adaptivity to user behavior | Through personalization scheme (explicit personalization only) | |
| | Adaptivity to business & organizational changes | No support. | |
| Out-Of-The-Box Capability | | Sample templates and customization code are available upon installation. | |
| Mixed Deployment (Internet, Intranet, Extranet) | | Internet deployment might be risky due to scalability limitations. | |

Core Content Management Concepts & Functionalities

| | | | |
|------------------------|---|--|--|
| Data Modeling | | | |
| Presentation | Ability to separate content from format | | |
| | Templating | | |
| | Ability to separate logic from format | | |
| | Support for multiple presentation devices & formats | | |
| | Support for Mobile devices | | |
| | Corporate Look & Feel | | |
| | XML Support | | |
| Component architecture | Support for content components | | |
| Caching | Content caching | | |
| | Component Caching | | |
| Content Repositories | | | |

Content Management Services & Facilities

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|---------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Content Search & Classification | Integrated Content Indexing & Search services | | |
| | Integrated Content classification services | | |
| Content Aggregation | | | |

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|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| Content Syndication | | | |
| Workflow | | | |
| Scheduled Launch & Expiration | | | |
| Subscription & Notification | | | |
| Staging | | | |
| Interactivity | | | |
| | Business Logic Management | | |
| | Event Handling | | |
| | Event Scheduling | | |
| Personalization | | | |
| Publishing | | | |
| Versioning | | | |
| Miscellaneous | | | |
| User Interface | Viewing tool | | |
| | Template Editing | | |
| | Maintenance tool | | |
| | Authoring tool | | |
| | Windows Explorer Integration | | |
| | MS Office Integration | | |
| | MS Outlook & Exchange Integration | | |
| Reporting & Analytics | | | |
| Campaign Management | | | |
| Security | Directory Support | | |
| | Single Sign-ON Support | | |

Sample Report
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