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Content Wrangler: e-Spirit statement on Open Text product strategy

e-Spirit CEO Jörn Bodemann comments the recent developments at Open Text in an article on TheContentWrangler.com.

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Chaos Content Management - Jörn Bodemann comments:

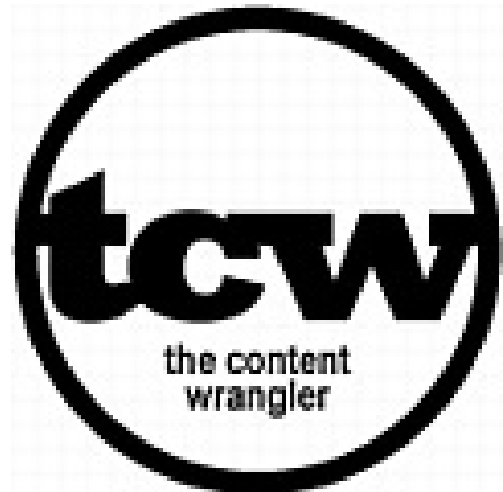
"The content management industry has a credibility problem. Too often, vendors in a confusing market have made big promises only to have their customers invest money in projects that ultimately fail.

A market consolidation might do the industry some good. But earlier this year when the American content management system flagship Vignette was purchased by Open Text, many observers were taken by surprise. Having just presented RedDot as the company's CMS reference product, now with Vignette it suddenly had a second option in its portfolio. To continue developing both platforms in parallel makes little sense from a financial standpoint. But at the same time it seems unlikely that the two solutions will be combined, as one is based on .NET and the other is JAVA-based. The question of which solution will be the focus of development going forward and what direction the migration should go in becomes critical. And this was also borne out in the latest quarterly numbers from industry analysts.

Open Text's answer that the migration may go in the direction of Vignette, would end up causing even more bewilderment. Are those users who have just made the officially recommended trek from Gauss to RedDot really going to want to make yet another move to Vignette? Are new customers who choose RedDot saddling a dead horse? In any case, Open Text-CEO John Shakleton seemed to indicate as much in his statements. The question thus remains: Is RedDot dead?

Too many questions remain unanswered. In my view, a migration from RedDot to Vignette may well prove to be technically infeasible. This might work for data, but not for entire projects. The architectures of the two systems are too different to pull it off. But from the perspective of a CMS provider, I'm critical of the way customers have been put in an awkward spot here. They're investing in a technology today that might be obsolete tomorrow.

This strategic uncertainty is detrimental to the content management industry as a whole. Yet, CMS vendors are still struggling to shake the perception that what they're offering is merely a "nice to have" solution. Content management systems are an essential component of corporate communication and thus of a company's overall strategy. Especially now as market requirements for CMS solutions extend into the area of compliance, the technology becomes ever more critical. A back-and-forth maneuver in product strategy in no way helps the industry build the trust it needs."



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