

## **'You Can't Manage What You Can't Measure'** Robert Bredlau of e-Spirit asks, "How efficient is your content reuse?"



Today's buzzword in the content management arena is "reuse" we must all reuse content to save time — to repurpose what already exists to become more efficient, and to re-publish to ensure message consistency and effectiveness. There are considerable advantages to reusing content in multiple locations on a website or on multiple sites or even to publish the content to different formats.

Content reuse is also one of the key benefits to be gained by implementing a Content Management System (CMS) and is therefore often the main driver of such a project. But, has anyone stopped to think how much content is reused? Do they know if they can measure this reuse of content? And what is classed as reuse anyway when we know in practice that sometimes only parts of the whole content are reused?

In reality very few organizations — even those with a CMS — are unable to realize this vision of content reuse in practice and I would certainly not recommend the relentless pursuit of the impossible.

However, there are some simple things to think about when embracing reuse and I have listed below five ways in which content should be commonly reused as an efficiency check list for your business and to measure your CMS system by.

### **1) Single Source publishing, or where content is published to multiple formats**

Given the multitude of media that can be published to today, this form of reuse is key to the success of any project and very cost effective. Content can be published to websites, intranets, PDA's and mobile phones, and XML for RSS syndication for example.

### **2) A Web page published in multiple locations**

This is perhaps the simplest form yet absolutely key to the efficiency of your business. Here a CMS with the ability to publish to multiple "channels" is central to this activity. The most obvious example for this type of content would be a news announcement which may be published to the home page, the news page, syndicated for RSS feed and be made available for customer newsletter emails and on the employee intranet.

### **3) A Web page is linked to from multiple locations**

Another simple form of reuse would be one page on a website being linked to from many locations within a single site. As above the classic example would be the news section of the website which may be linked from the homepage, from the product pages, and even from a customer testimonial page. This is not true content reuse since the page is still only being published once – it just has multiple links to it. However it is an efficient way of pushing out content without re-publishing or re-writing.

### **4) Standard templates used throughout the website**

An obvious choice but one to ensure you embrace, apart from a standard look and feel to your website, it is key to ensure that certain elements such as logos, headers, boilerplates and disclaimers are reused – saving time and money in re-loading to multiple pages and channels. One small change will be re-published immediately and is certainly key with regards to any legal information that may change on a regular basis.

### **5) Aspects of content reused in multiple locations**

This is when content reuse becomes more difficult to measure and also more difficult to manage from an authoring point of view. You may have a requirement to use only part of content already in existence, your CMS should allow you to view what type of content already exists easily to allow reuse of components should they be available. The obvious example would be product information or standard introductions to biographies or press releases.

### **6) So is this useful for my business?**

Yes, reuse is nirvana and whilst I would always suggest setting objectives and measurements before embarking on any project or strategy, struggling to measure re-use at the expense of other activities should not be pursued. Instead using the above as guidance to your implementation of reuse should see your organization well on the way to best practice and efficient use of content.

*Robert Bredlau moved to Day Software GmbH as head of business development in 2001. There he succeeded in acquiring a number of well-known partner companies, and redeveloped the company's positioning from a service organization to a software manufacturer. He became global alliance vice president at Day in 2002, and was also responsible for developing and setting up a global partner strategy between the Day sites as well as establishing a worldwide partner organization. Robert has been director of international business development at e-Spirit AG since 2007 and is responsible for developing and expanding strategic international markets. He is also the main contact partner for IT industry and market analysts.*