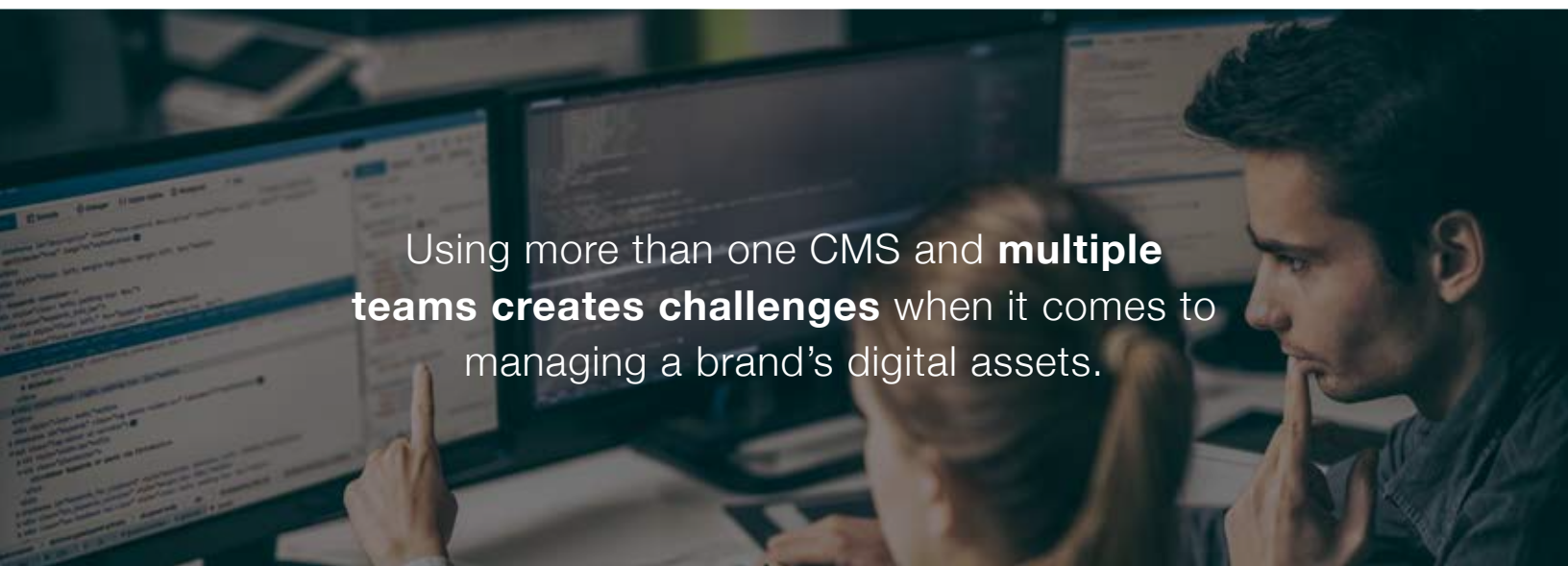




STANDARDIZING YOUR WEB PLATFORM:
ONE PLATFORM, ONE FORMAT



CAN WE AGREE ON THESE STATEMENTS?



This ebook/white paper addresses

THREE KEY TOPICS:

1
**THE VALUE OF STANDARDIZING
YOUR WEB PLATFORM**

2
**KEEPING YOUR PARTNER/VENDOR ROSTER
SMALLER AND MORE AGILE**

3
**WHY DRUPAL HELPS WITH BOTH
ABOVE STATEMENTS**

This paper is written to appeal to a wide audience: C-level marketing decision-maker, digital project manager, and even to the brand manager.

- Yes, we used the word Drupal on the prior page.
- No, this is not a technical piece about the best development platforms and coding challenges.
- Rather, this is a non-technical paper that discusses the business value of our three suppositions.
- This is about making digital experiences purposeful, and delivering a meaningful, useful, productive, active and engaging experience to your customers.



INTRODUCTION

Today's competitive business environment demands that brands and businesses create intention when developing new web properties, apps or digital tools.

These apps, websites and tools are the front door to building businesses, but too often we don't treat them that way.

Those who endorse the purposeful web believe in these three primary components:

1. Digital properties must employ the **right technologies to drive efficiencies and effectiveness** that make a difference in the experience, and must meet myriad customer needs and demands.

2. You must define your business goals to succeed. Clear business goals – whether around revenue, visitation, engagement, technical functionality or more – drive the purposeful web. Enhance the digital experience you want to create with the intent of solving challenges unique to your organization.

3. Measuring the true cost of almost anything can be difficult. But for complex businesses, **understanding the difference between cost and investment is everything.** An honest conversation about investment is critical.

As digital experiences evolve, more assets are transitioning from websites to robust apps.

Apps can manage complexity that a website cannot, especially when it comes to supporting large businesses that require their users to do something purposeful.

This approach requires enterprise-level technology to deliver the intended outcome.

Many websites only say something. Commonly referred to as a 'brochure site,' a website is a destination where visitors can find information about an organization, product, etc. but they can't actually do anything. Most websites give users only small, basic actions like signing up for a newsletter or commenting on a blog post.

An enterprise-level app does something, acting as a destination where users can not only find information they need, but do something with that information. For example, www.weather.com is a web app that gives users/visitors the opportunity to look at weather forecasts, check the Doppler radar, view content specific to a certain location, etc. It seems simple to users while the back-end processes complex actions and produces useful data.





E-MAIL

Business Strategy

Innovation
Marketing
Solutions
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Analysis
News
Business
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GLOBAL

WEB PLATFORM STANDARDIZATION

(and Why It's a Smart Move)

NETWORK

SEARCH

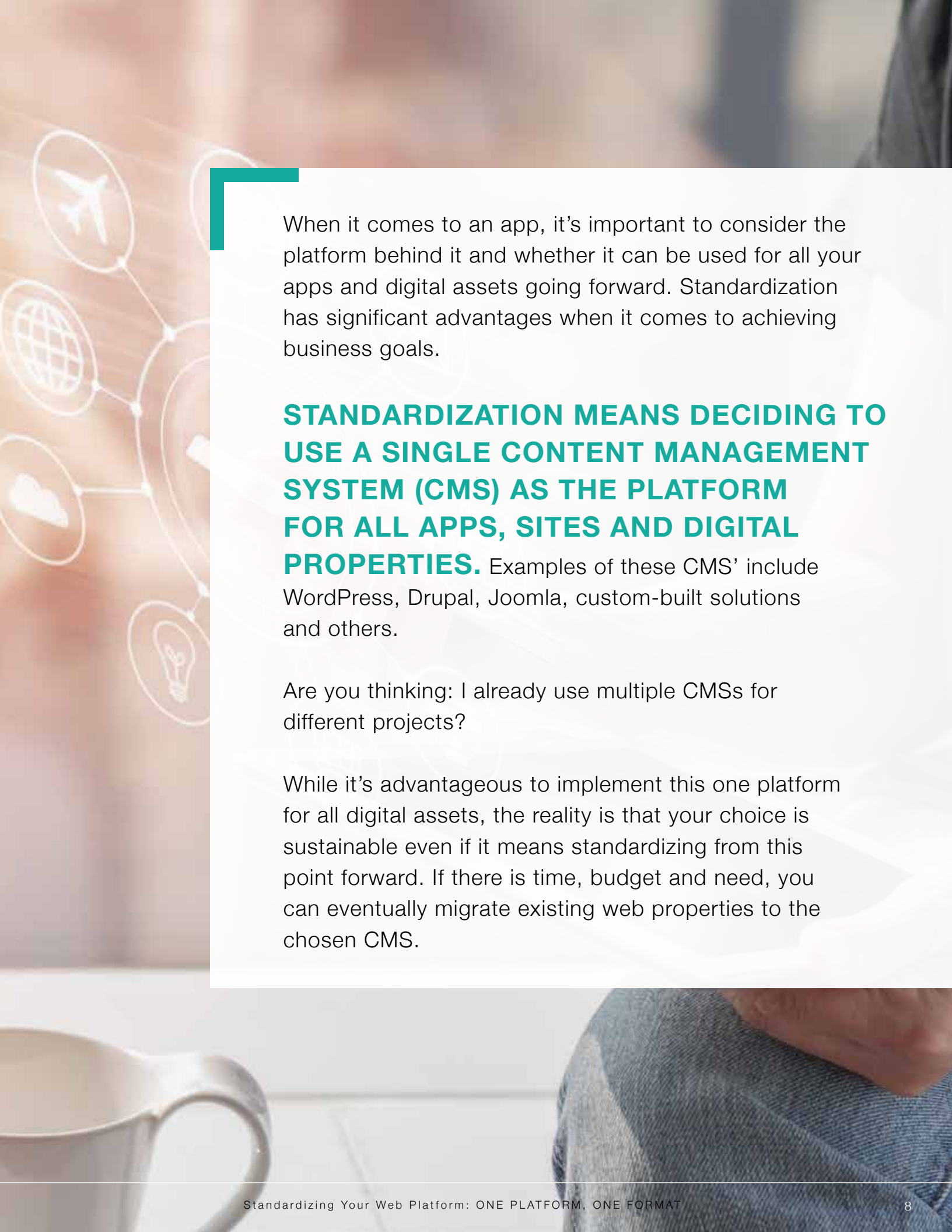
WWW.



@SYMBOL



WORKSTATION



When it comes to an app, it's important to consider the platform behind it and whether it can be used for all your apps and digital assets going forward. Standardization has significant advantages when it comes to achieving business goals.

STANDARDIZATION MEANS DECIDING TO USE A SINGLE CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (CMS) AS THE PLATFORM FOR ALL APPS, SITES AND DIGITAL PROPERTIES.

Examples of these CMS' include WordPress, Drupal, Joomla, custom-built solutions and others.

Are you thinking: I already use multiple CMSs for different projects?

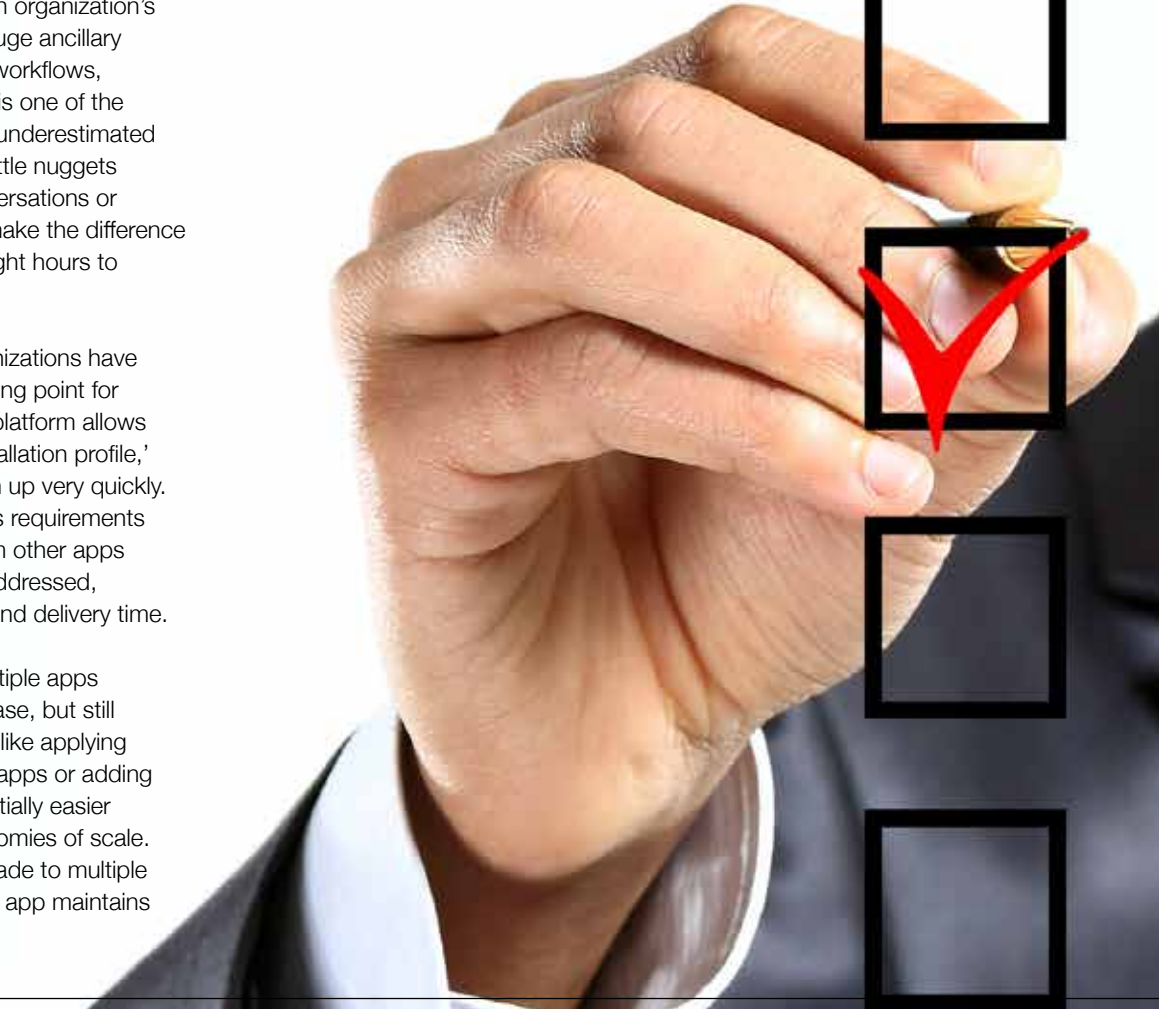
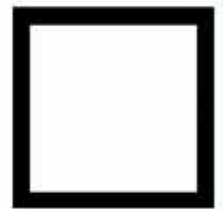
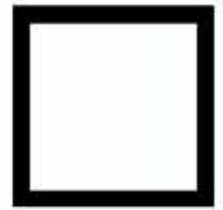
While it's advantageous to implement this one platform for all digital assets, the reality is that your choice is sustainable even if it means standardizing from this point forward. If there is time, budget and need, you can eventually migrate existing web properties to the chosen CMS.

Organizations often don't realize the extensive benefits of having all their apps on the same platform – the benefits are significant.

Seven reasons to standardize are:

- Improved cost and efficiency. It's common for larger, enterprise-level organizations to have multiple web applications, from various departments running on different platforms to using various developers and hosting solutions. This means increased total cost of ownership for managing those properties – and decreased efficiency of management and maintenance.
- Streamlined skill sets. All those applications need to be maintained and different platforms require different knowledge bases to be properly managed. That means contracts with different vendors to provide the required services and expertise. At the very least, it means additional staff is required with different skill sets. Standardizing on one platform greatly reduces and more likely eliminates this issue.
- Increased ancillary benefit. Only one skill set is needed by staff working within an organization's web applications. This has the huge ancillary benefit of allowing staff to trade workflows, tips, resources, etc. This benefit is one of the advantages that is most grossly underestimated by organizations. Often, it's the little nuggets of information learned from conversations or working with colleagues which make the difference between taking 15 minutes or eight hours to accomplish the same task.
- Improved standards. Many organizations have a standard base setup as a starting point for all new apps. Working with one platform allows the establishment of a 'base installation profile,' allowing new projects to be spun up very quickly. Only the specifics about an app's requirements (e.g., what makes it different from other apps in the organization) need to be addressed, significantly reducing both cost and delivery time.
- Better security and updates. Multiple apps can operate off the same codebase, but still utilize different databases. Tasks like applying security updates, upgrading the apps or adding functionality all become exponentially easier and can take advantage of economies of scale. Changes and updates can be made to multiple apps, simultaneously, while each app maintains its own separate database.

- Easier exchange of information. More organizations are realizing the benefits of sharing information between departments. One of the biggest obstacles in internal communication is having information stored in different platform databases and in various formats. Standardizing on one platform means interdepartmental collaboration becomes much easier. C-level management can much more easily run comprehensive analytics and conduct thorough searches if information is all stored in one format on one platform.
- Customized user experience. That may not sound like much at first. However, think of the implications of the marketing department having the ability to show a 40-year-old user from Texas who is on the app at 10 p.m. different content than a 30-year-old user from Boston who is on the app at the same time – all from within the same app! The possibilities of customized UX are astounding.





VENDOR STANDARDIZATION

Standardizing on one vendor has significant benefits.

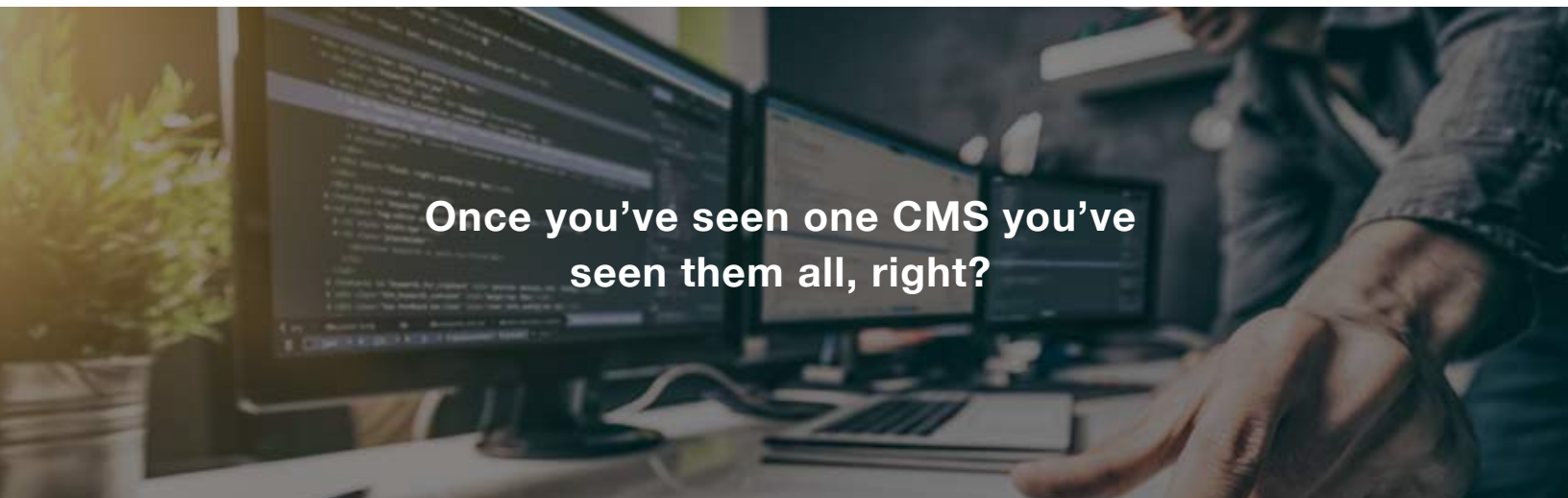
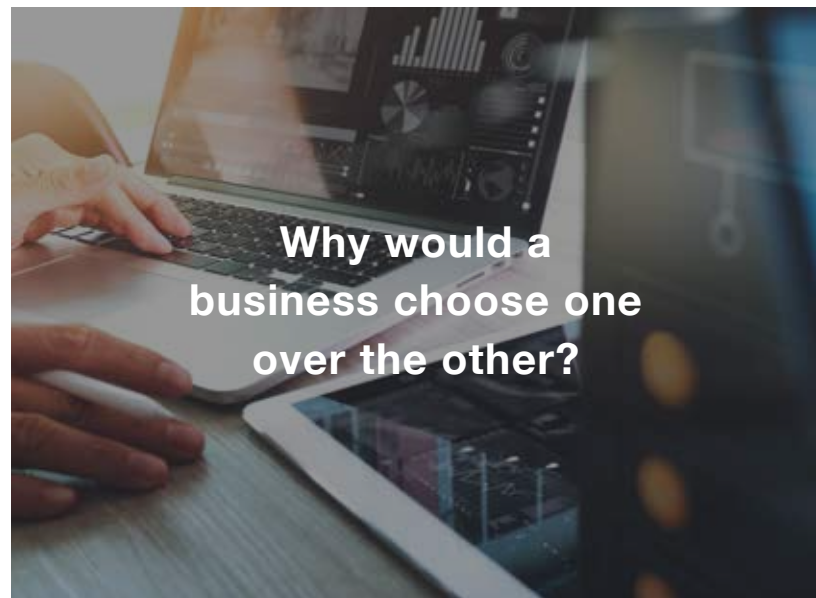
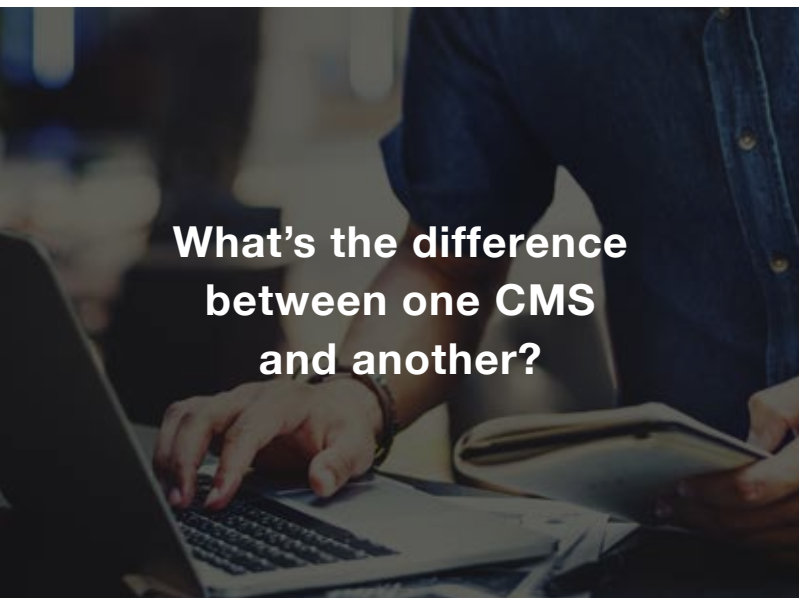
Once an organization decides on a platform, the next step is to choose a service provider (or limited number of providers). The service provider is the entity the organization relies on to provide the required services or provide expert consultation. (After all, that's why you hired them in the first place!)

Using an agency that works with open source software and can fully and efficiently integrate your application platform, hosting solution and development workflows means:

- **One point of contact** who is familiar with the organization's apps, business goals, workflows, staff, etc. and who can efficiently coordinate interactions between the development team(s) and the organization's staff.
- **Specialization.** You should look for an agency or specialist who knows the platform down to the last little facet of functionality. With Drupal, this is especially important. Not only is this a major factor in getting the most out of a given platform's capabilities, it is equally important in getting work done in the most efficient and cost-effective manner. Very little time is spent trying to figure out how to do something; your investment is allocated by putting solutions in place, not training a developer.
- **Cross-departmental efficiency.** Other departments within the organization (IT, marketing, etc.) get more exposure to the partner, and gain an understanding about how to work with and what to expect from the partner. For example, marketing knows what assets and formats are typically required by the agency for a given request, allowing for reduced time-to-market and efficient project completion.
- **Rapid deployment.** Web apps are ever-changing, continuing to add functionality on a regular basis. A dedicated partner will have necessary workflows in place to iterate and then deploy changes quickly. Multiple departments can then all work on their respective projects simultaneously, without interrupting either the live site or the work of colleagues.

EVERY BUSINESS MUST MAKE ITS OWN EVALUATION AND DETERMINATION ABOUT THE PLATFORM AND PARTNER THAT BEST MEETS ITS NEEDS.

Knowing your business' needs helps answer these common questions:



While there is not a winner takes all here, we do believe there is a clear choice to achieving the purposeful web for businesses with enterprise-level digital app and digital needs.



**WHY YOU
SHOULD
STANDARDIZE
ON DRUPAL.**



For myriad reasons, we believe Drupal is the best platform for medium-to large-sized organizations. **HERE ARE EIGHT REASONS WHY WE BELIEVE DRUPAL IS THE RIGHT CHOICE FOR ENTERPRISES:**

- 1.** Drupal is open source. If you've been researching software within the past 10 years, then you've probably heard that term mentioned quite a bit. It's important to understand what it means. Open source means the software codebase is available to anyone who wants it – for free. Be careful, though. 'Free' doesn't mean the software doesn't cost anything to manage and maintain. It just means you don't have to pay for the software or pay to use it right out of the box. Managing, maintaining and customizing the software to suit your specific needs often requires a professional development agency... and they're not free.
- 2.** Drupal 8 and beyond are front-end agnostic, meaning all the heavy lifting on the back-end is performed by Drupal and the front-end (e.g., client-facing, presentation layer, etc.) is powered by... well... anything. It could be HTML, it could be the latest flavor of JavaScript, it could be an iOS or Android phone app.
- 3.** Drupal has a large community. Open source software generally has a good user base that's able to lend assistance and contribute additional functionality to the software. Drupal has, perhaps, the largest, most vibrant developer community of any open source software. There are thousands of contributors who are constantly developing new functionality and who are happy to help other developers with challenging issues.
- 4.** Drupal is highly secure, more so than most other open source platforms (and certainly more secure than any proprietary platform). Security updates are monitored by the Drupal Security Team (DST) and any necessary updates are released every Wednesday.
- 5.** Drupal is flexible and scalable. It can manage everything from small, departmental micro-sites to massively complex, data-intensive, highly-trafficked applications. Choosing Drupal to run one small departmental site is probably overkill, but when other company apps are being run on Drupal, the advantages of standardizing make that choice a no-brainer.
- 6.** Drupal 8 makes content editing incredibly easy. One of the most labor-intensive aspects of any web app is editing content on various pages. Whether it's creating new copy, editing existing content or removing dated material, content editing is an everyday occurrence for app management. Drupal 8 allows even the least technically savvy user to easily perform such actions. No organization wants to be paying development agency prices for regular content editing, especially when its own staff is available, knows what and how they want to say something, and can do it now.
- 7.** Drupal 8 is fast. According to a study from CA Technologies, users will abandon apps with load times greater than six seconds. Drupal 8 uses caching much more heavily than previous versions. When paired with the proper hosting solution, its performance is blazingly fast.
- 8.** Drupal 8 is optimized for mobile devices. Users are accessing web apps via mobile devices far more than desktop machines. Drupal 8 was built from the ground up to run faster and look better than any other CMS on all types of mobile devices. Don't make the common mistake of assuming most users will access your app on a laptop or desktop. Standardize on a platform that is purposefully built to make the most of mobile devices.



There are many more reasons why Drupal makes great sense as an app platform for medium-to large-sized organizations. When deciding on a platform, remember to research each platform that you are considering.

It is extremely important to understand the value of using open source software. Aside from other advantages offered by open source software (better security, lower total cost of ownership, more resources, more customizable, wider communities, etc.), it is exponentially easier to move to another service provider in the event the current vendor needs to bring in additional expertise or needs to be replaced.

An organization using proprietary platforms or disparate platforms faces greater difficulty changing service providers or bringing in additional providers on a given project. It may be tempting to keep different apps on different platforms serviced by different vendors to avoid the potential issue of over-reliance on a single service provider. In fact, the potential issue of over-reliance on a single vendor can be mitigated by utilizing a small, select group of vendors. That way, an organization has other partners who can pick up any slack if a vendor exits a project without causing any significant delays.

However, don't equate the actual with the potential. For the reasons above and more, the actual advantages gained by standardizing on one platform overwhelmingly outweigh the potential disadvantage of having to replace a vendor.

A hand holds a smartphone, with a magnifying glass held over the screen. The background is a blurred laptop keyboard. Overlaid on the image is a futuristic digital interface with a dark background, white lines, and dots. A large circular area is highlighted with a dashed white border. The text "A FINAL WORD ABOUT STANDARDIZATION" is centered in white, bold, uppercase letters. In the bottom right corner, there is a circular icon containing a white outline of a building or structure.

**A FINAL WORD
ABOUT
STANDARDIZATION**

Standardizing – on a platform and with a partner – is a first, important step to creating an app that does what you need it to do.

Much like standardizing comes down to business preferences and is a critical business questions, so is establishing the business goals for your project.

Getting it right is a simple process. Before starting a project, especially one of such significance, answer two questions:

WHAT'S YOUR BUSINESS STRATEGY? WHAT DO YOU NEED YOUR USERS TO DO?

Organizations that are purposeful about their digital business tools understand the mix of business strategy with web strategy. They create intention. And they succeed.





To discuss standardization in more detail or learn more about the value of Drupal for enterprise-level apps, contact [Thinkbean](#).