

White Paper

Six Reasons Why Sitecore Could Be the Experience Platform For You

Providing you with:

- ✓ An overview of the Sitecore® Experience Platform™
- ✓ Ways Sitecore could benefit your marketing strategy
- ✓ Advice on optimising your technical implementation



Introduction

What is Sitecore?

Powering the websites of over 3,500 customers worldwide, Sitecore delivers a single connected platform that delivers a single connected experience across both online and offline channels, empowering brands to easily engage in seamless conversations with their audiences when and where they want, in real-time.



sitecore[®]

Because Sitecore's Experience Platform combines an enterprise-level Content Management System (CMS) with advanced customer intelligence capabilities, it brings web content management, marketing automation, email marketing, social media, e-commerce, optimisation and analytics together in a single, integrated platform that's incredibly easy to use, capturing every minute interaction – and intention – that customers and prospects have with a brand, both on its website and other digital channels.

The importance of integration

Trends and technologies such as social networks and intelligent search engines, which allow users to increasingly filter and curate the messages they're exposed to, have seen us move ever-closer to a true 'age of the customer'. This shift in power has been intensified as the variety of platforms and devices able to transmit and receive information expands, from smartphones

and tablets through to internet-enabled TVs, e-readers and even wearable tech. With users now expecting an optimised and tailored experience no matter how they interact with an organisation, marketers have been forced to update their digital strategies with an increased focus on delivering relevant and valuable content on demand and in a variety of formats. In many cases, achieving this requires the consolidation and enhancement of the underlying IT infrastructure to support “an enterprise-scale platform that will deliver greater customer insight so [marketers] can tailor digital experiences that inspire engagement, loyalty, and advocacy” (source: McKinsey).

In this report we'll go into more detail about some of the specific challenges organisations may be grappling with as a result of this shift, looking at the ways the Sitecore Experience Platform can help address these issues along with guidance to ensure you get the most out of your solution should you choose to implement the platform.



You want to minimise administrative overheads

The platform behind thousands of high-profile websites featuring millions of content items and advanced functionality, Sitecore offers an array of built-in features that simplify the management of even large and complex sites to allow your team to focus on more strategic activity. Its intuitive interface, which includes What You See Is What You Get (WYSIWYG) editors, step-by-step wizards and inline editing makes it easy to create and update web pages; significantly reducing the need for developer input to increase the speed with which changes can be made and maximise use of IT budgets. Even business-critical functionality such as lead capture can be built without requiring technical knowledge, thanks to Sitecore's flexible and easy-to-use "Web Forms For Marketers" editor that enables non-developers to rapidly create the intelligent forms necessary for gathering vital user information.

This focus on usability is carried through the entire platform, with the same intuitive functionality helping unlock Sitecore's powerful engagement capabilities (covered in more detail later). Wizards guide you through the process of creating rules that tailor the presentation of your site in response to a variety of triggers, while the separation of content and presentation enables individual page components to be customised using a simple 'point-and-click' editor. Not only does this further streamline the day-to-day management of your site, it provides non-technical users with direct access to an incredibly powerful marketing tool, removing any barriers to executing a highly-optimised digital strategy and helping your organisation respond rapidly to changing trends and behaviours. Additionally, thanks to support for unlimited multi-lingual variations and location-based permissions you can also scale your website as market demands dictate.

However, while ease-of-use is of course an important consideration, it shouldn't come at the expense of administrative control, and Sitecore's advanced workflows provide you with valuable security in this area. With role-based permissions and versioning all users, even across different teams and departments, are empowered to contribute to the continued improvement of your website while ensuring you have final sign-off on how your organisation is portrayed.

Working with Sitecore

- Get your site up and running more quickly by beginning the content entry process as your solution's being built
- Have confidence in the quality of your output with integrated validation tools and controls
- Create complex pages quickly and easily by augmenting your knowledge and skills with Sitecore's range of training courses



You're looking to increase user engagement

It's been reported that organisations see the greatest material benefit to business results when active audience participation occurs (source: cScape and Econsultancy), but this can be difficult to initiate and facilitate. Targeting users with the right messages is a critical first step, and requires a comprehensive understanding of how your audience thinks, behaves and makes decisions. Sitecore helps you build this picture by delivering detailed insight into the needs and interests of individual users from the moment they land on your site through granular real-time analytics; recording whether a user came to you via a search engine, social media platform or email link, determining where they are based geographically, and even tracking the individual search terms, updates, adverts and campaigns that drove them there.

This information, combined with the Sitecore personalisation rules mentioned earlier, enables marketers to tailor the user's very first experience of the site to maximise impact; for example, prominently displaying certain products and services based on the terms typed into the search engine, updating pricing to match the user's local currency, or featuring special offers and discounts in response to the individual campaigns that prompted action. This helps confirm to the user that your organisation has the information they're looking for, encouraging them to complete desired actions and improving brand recognition to keep them coming back for more.

Many organisations will also have a number of different core audience types that they want to attract, each with different intents and behaviours. Sitecore supports the creation of distinct personas mapped to these different audience types and linked to specific content items and tasks that denote likely intent and value, to enable you to



tailor your content and approach at an even more granular level. For example, users looking at a brochure may be at an early buying stage and will probably be interested in learning more about those products or similar ones, while someone who downloads a case study may be further down the purchase funnel than another who registers for a general best practice guide. Once personas have been configured, Sitecore tracks a user's activity as they journey through the site in order to match them with your profiles; at which point pre-defined rules, configured using the same intuitive process as the off-site triggers, are employed to display the most relevant content. Presenting your users with information appropriate to their persona and browsing context in such a way not only helps boost customer advocacy and retention rates, but enables cross-selling and up-selling activities to maximise opportunities for revenue generation.

Working with Sitecore

- Refine your personalisation rules to drive desirable actions by investing in a comprehensive research and scoping phase
- Get under the skin of your audience with specialist insight from user experience experts throughout the duration of your project
- Deliver long-term results by regularly reviewing who's coming to your site and how they're behaving, to confirm it matches your assumptions

3

Your users interact with you through multiple channels

In recent years the volume and variety of connected devices has risen exponentially, to the point where organisations can no longer make assumptions about how their users are interacting with them. It's predicted that four out of five global internet users will soon be a mobile web user (source: eMarketer), and the average person carries three connected devices with them at all times (source: Sophos), highlighting the importance of considering your users' experience beyond the traditional desktop.

To display content across the various devices and platforms your users may be engaging with, CMS solutions such as Sitecore separate content from its presentation, meaning that a single piece of content can be reused in multiple areas. In addition to this, Sitecore offers automatic device detection that recognises how a user is accessing your site and responds accordingly, enabling you to deliver a consistent yet optimised experience at every turn for increased user satisfaction and engagement.

Of course, users on different devices may have specific needs, requiring a more tailored approach to most effectively respond to and anticipate these. Supporting the creation of distinct templates for individual devices, Sitecore helps organisations deliver a more useful



and memorable experience that encourages users to stay on their site and increase return visits; for example, location-specific offers can be added to encourage click-through from users on the move, and crucial processes such as product selection and purchase can be simplified to accommodate smaller screens and touch capabilities. With a highly flexible underlying architecture, your strategy can also be seamlessly future-proofed in the event of new devices, technologies and services gaining popularity.



In today's hyper-connected world, however, even optimising for each individual channel may no longer be enough. Trends such as sequential screening, where a user moves from one device to another to accomplish a single task, are now common, making joining up disparate and often siloed channels vital to avoid visitor drop-off and maintain competitive advantage. Sitecore's integrated multi-channel campaign management provides you with the tools to achieve this by enabling campaigns to be run simultaneously and integrated across all touchpoints, to more effectively target activity and improve your ability to respond to new opportunities wherever they arise. Additionally, this integration means that you can further increase the relevance and authenticity of your messages by leveraging details of any previous interactions a user has had with your organisation to determine personalisation rules.

As users increasingly interact with organisations beyond the traditional owned media channels, it's important to reach out to them through their chosen spaces too. With email still the best digital channel for return on investment (source: Adestra and Econsultancy), using Sitecore's integrated email manager enables you to take advantage of this powerful medium, with the system allowing automated mails to be sent in response to a variety of triggers such as downloading a piece of content and requesting a demonstration, entering valuable prospects into nurturing campaigns that deliver persuasive messages at exactly the right moment, and offering detailed analytics to track conversions from your sent campaigns through to the landing page and beyond. The social networks that pervade your users' daily lives can also be integrated into your strategy through a dedicated Social Connected feature, with widgets that send users to your social profiles from your site, unique discount codes that encourage social followers to visit your site, and automatic updates that are pushed out when new content is published. And, with the added ability to create specific URLs for each of your campaigns, even offline activity can be tracked for a truly holistic approach.

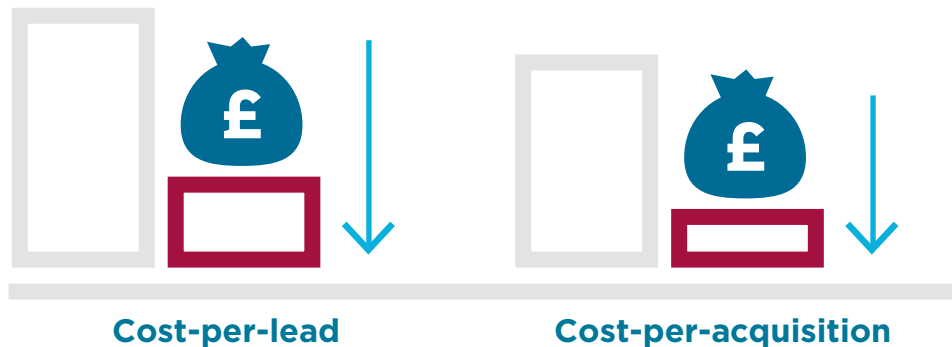
Working with Sitecore

- Maximise the relevance and timeliness of your messages by mapping common user journeys to understand how and when users interact with different touchpoints
- Increase the accessibility of your digital services by using analytical data to uncover popular platforms and devices, tailoring your strategy accordingly
- Validate the usability of your site across different devices by conducting testing with representative users

4

Sales are demanding more qualified leads

Once you've attracted visitors to your site, you'll no doubt want to continue the momentum you've built up early in the customer journey throughout the purchase funnel so that deals are closed more quickly and cost-per-lead and cost-per-acquisition are reduced.



Communication between sales and marketing is key to achieving this, and it's been found that mature practitioners of integrated marketing are more likely to collaborate with sales to set goals and execute programmes (source: Forrester). Sitecore gives both teams the information they need to work together to agree an effective strategy, for example jointly identifying which are the most valuable leads by validating assumptions with measurable results. This provides sales with a guide to who they should target as a priority, as well as suggesting which types of users your marketing activity should be aiming to attract.

Sales and marketing can also agree on the most important events that occur across your site, for example filling in a form, downloading a report, adding a product to a basket, sharing content via social media, or viewing specific pages or content items, and set up goals for these actions. These goals can then be assigned points according to the value they offer your organisation, with Sitecore recording the number of goals completed and the associated value points for each user.

This informs a single “Engagement Value” metric that enables sales to further target their activity, while also making it easy to compare like-for-like performance across different channels and campaigns, and improving your ability to conduct analysis (covered in more detail later).



As well as helping determine which leads are ready to be approached, Sitecore also provides a wealth of additional data that can be used to help convert opportunities, from vital signals such as pages visited, interactions and goals completed through to granular details including time on site, location, device and more. Even anonymous users can be tracked, so that their history is delivered to sales as soon as they become known; ensuring that no opportunity is overlooked and that conversions, revenue and profit are maximised.

Working with Sitecore

- Enhance your sales team’s understanding of prospects by setting up custom goals such as a user completing a specific set of actions, or returning to your site multiple times over a certain period
- Target the most engaged prospects with automatic alerts that inform sales when a user reaches a certain value, based on the tasks they complete
- Improve response times through the delivery of email, SMS and social alerts, to notify your sales team wherever they are



You're being asked to do more with your marketing budget

Along with increasing engagement from digital channels and improving the quality and velocity of the sales funnel, many marketers are being forced to optimise their use of available budgets, reinforcing the need to continually iterate strategies in response to quantitative and qualitative insights. The Sitecore platform has been designed to make understanding and acting upon this data as efficient as possible, not only reducing the time required to conduct administrative activities but enabling more rapid responses based on what is and isn't performing well. This is becoming an increasing concern as more data is being created faster than ever before, with over 70% of CEOs reported to be actively seeking a better understanding of individual customer requirements and improved response time to market needs (source: IBM).

Customer requirements / Response times



As well as improving the speed with which teams can react, having a complete picture of the results is also vitally important to identify what is and isn't working. Sitecore provides this holistic view through its joined-up analytics that offer information from your website, mobile-specific sites and applications, email campaigns, social media activity, and advertising assets to provide in-depth insight into the effectiveness of your marketing activity.

Being able to manage entire digital campaigns without the support of an outside technical team is also important

for organisations wishing to act more quickly and reduce overheads, and Sitecore's ease-of-use supports this too. From enabling non-technical users to launch and retire campaigns in response to trends in performance, to conducting A/B and multivariate testing on variations of copy, images, design elements and components, the platform helps you find the most effective approaches quickly and easily; saving precious time and minimising wasted investment in non-productive activities.

Automation is another option for marketers looking to maximise their efficiency while maintaining a strong relationship with users; something that can be achieved via Sitecore's Engagement Plans. Mapped against key user journeys, users are automatically subscribed to these plans when they trigger certain events on your site and beyond; for example, once a user has downloaded a product brochure, they may be presented with a form that allows them to request a demonstration. If they complete this form a confirmation message is automatically sent to them and a task set in the background for a member of the sales team to get in touch. As a result you're able to see exactly what stage of the customer lifecycle your users are at and highlight drop-off points or bottlenecks that need to be addressed to maximise conversion rate, as well as lucrative opportunities that could be explored further.

Working with Sitecore

- Continually improve performance by adjusting spend, channel focus and segmentation in real-time to focus on only the most valuable areas
- Maintain up-to-date messaging as new user information becomes available by integrating Customer Relationship Management (CRM) data
- Extend your connection with users beyond your website by leveraging Sitecore's email campaign manager to send nurturing emails as part of your Engagement Plans



You need a solution you can trust

When justifying a new purchase to your senior stakeholders it's usually quantifiable evidence of business benefit that matters most. Having helped organisations drive increased engagement, efficiency and conversions since 2001, Sitecore has a strong history of delivering proven results, which can help increase confidence in the benefits it can deliver for your own organisation. For example:

- easyJet hit five sales per second on their Sitecore-powered website during a January sale
- Insurance provider Aviva saw a 40% growth in leads after moving to Sitecore
- The UK Government's Department for Business, Innovation and Skills expects to save between £4-£5 million in the coming years as a result of implementing the platform

easyJet



Department
for Business
Innovation & Skills

Of course, once your solution is in place you have to be able to justify the purchase decision, and with 73% of CEOs reporting that they feel marketers lack business credibility because they fail to quantify the success of their campaigns (source: The Fournaise Group) it's critical that you demonstrate measurably positive results. Sitecore's analytical capabilities support the delivery of this information, featuring visual executive dashboards alongside the more granular detail covered earlier to provide an instant and easily accessible high-level overview of the impact the platform is having on those figures that matter most to your organisation. As with individual metrics, this data can be broken down to

show the influence of individual channels, campaigns and content for more effective comparison, and to help you secure future budget for initiatives that have proven to be profitable. Results can also be analysed according to different regions; highlighting potential areas for increased investment or indeed where more specific targeting may be required.

It's not only important to provide proof of how your current activities are supporting your organisation in achieving overarching goals though; you also need to predict changing trends in behaviour. Analytical capabilities allow you to identify patterns and adapt your efforts in order to pre-empt new developments; helping you remain ahead of the curve and the competition while enabling you to clearly explain your reasoning behind the direction of your marketing strategy to the C-suite and beyond.

Working with Sitecore

- Easily compare and contrast the performance of different campaigns thanks to a single Engagement Value metric
- Discover exactly who is visiting your site by drilling down into specific information such as organisation name and location
- Improve lead management by classifying visits depending on whether they are a customer, potential client and more, and syncing this information with your CRM system

Next Steps

If you're in the process of researching, shortlisting and selecting a new marketing or customer experience platform, there are a number of considerations that must be addressed to ensure the solution you choose most effectively meets the requirements of your organisation and users. While much of your evaluation process will depend on your strategic plan and objectives, some important questions to ask yourself include:

- Does your organisation have any legacy systems that need to be supported by the new solution? Certain systems may be better suited to specific technologies so be careful to first confirm that vital existing services can be integrated with ease
- How many sites, users and user types are covered by the licence? Make sure that all relevant members of your team will be able to access the system, and if you're planning to scale your site check that your licence can accommodate this
- When were your shortlisted solutions last updated? If a platform is not being regularly developed on you may not be able to take advantage of cutting-edge capabilities, services and platforms
- Does the vendor have a formal roadmap for future development? Remember, the vendor may have a list of approved partners who will manage the build; you'll want to assess these agencies just as thoroughly as the overall solution
- How much assistance is offered to help you get to grips with the solution? Ensure that the level and type of support available is adequate; for example, if your internal team is already proficient in a different development language greater training investment may be required to get them up to speed with the new system

- Is the solution supported by a strong community?
Having a wide and active user base can provide many additional benefits, from self-help support forums to extensive libraries of plugins that can remove the overheads of developing valuable functionality from scratch

At Box UK our team of expert consultants and developers have helped numerous organisations identify the most appropriate software to help them achieve their strategic vision, and as a trusted Sitecore Partner we're ideally placed to help you leverage the platform for best results. To find out more visit our [Sitecore](#) page, and [get in touch](#) with a member of our team to request a demonstration.



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