

The Benefits of Building Your Non-Profit Community Site on Drupal or Wordpress



Thinking about using a Content Management System (CMS) for your nonprofit community website?

You need to know how many of your finite resources you are willing to put into building and growing your online community. And, we're not just talking financially.

WHICH CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (CMS) IS BEST?

Before picking a CMS system like Drupal or WordPress, you and your stakeholders will need to determine what you want to achieve by building your online community. You will also need to consider what benefits your target audience will receive when they participate in your online community.



COMMUNITY WEBSITES: COMMON CAPABILITIES

Establishing what your members want to achieve through your online presence will help you determine what capabilities you will need your CMS to have. While Drupal and Wordpress have a lot of overlap in terms of functionality, there are some key differences between the two.

Some common actions, you may wish your community members to perform on your website are as follows:

- Donate!
- Comment on blogs
- Submit user stories and blogs
- See upcoming events and create personalized calendars
- Sign-in and have member profiles where they can update personal information
- Participate in group discussions via forums

- Share to social media
- See live feeds from Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook Live, and comment from the website.
- Live chat
- Purchase tickets for upcoming events
- Receive relevant information
- Search for key topics
- Interactive maps, etc

You also need to consider what abilities and functionality you would like your website administrators to have access to:

- Would you like a dashboard/system for managing your donations?
- Would you like to set different permissions for different users?
- Would you like to be able to email individuals directly from the CMS system?
- Would you like to automatically publish to your social media accounts?
- Moderate discussions?

- Edit and publish blog information?
- Change and update features?
- Easily add or incorporate new features?

Once you know this, you can begin to compare different CMS platforms to determine which will be the best fit for your nonprofit's needs.



SHOULD I USE DRUPAL OR WORDPRESS FOR MY COMMUNITY WEBSITE?

There are a lot of CMS options out there. At Cheeky Monkey Media we usually use Drupal or WordPress because they are mobile friendly (out-ofthe-box) and open source, which means that your nonprofit doesn't have to pay monthly or yearly subscription fees like you would with a proprietary CMS or cloud based community platform software.

Also, since we're talking about building online communities, we like the open source nature of WordPress and Drupal because open source means that the both systems depend on a large online communities to keep them going. Developers and others in the Drupal and WordPress sphere are always working to build and improve upon the work of other developers. There is a strong culture of sharing which we think is extremely important.

So, as far as flexibility, cost, and the ability for constant innovation go, both Drupal and WordPress are excellent choices. But how do you know which is truly the best choice for your nonprofit?Should I use Drupal or WordPress for my Community Website?

WHEN IS DRUPAL THE BEST CHOICE?

We recently used Drupal to build the National Hemophilia Foundation's Victory for Women website and Jobs for the Future's Pathways to Prosperity Network website, a collaboration of Jobs for the Future and the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Both websites included:

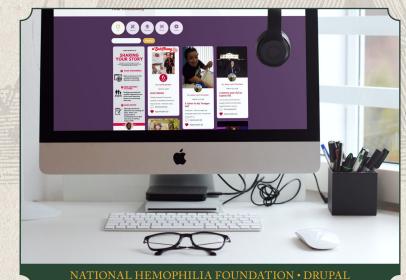
- Member directories
- Community forums
- Resource repositories
- Social media integration
- The ability to submit user storiesThe ability to interact with other
- users through comments, etc.

We decided to use Drupal for a number of reasons. Both organizations were already on Drupal, so using Drupal just made sense. Drupal taxonomy (the way you tag, categorize, and organize complex content) is amazing, so that's another huge plus! On the Pathways to Prosperity website, for example, users needed to have the ability to seamlessly filter through a lot of different types of content. Drupal's sophisticated tagging (taxonomy) system made it super easy for developers to create different filters and adapt them as necessary so that website administrators can set content and story types to make it

easier for website users to search for the information most interesting to them. Drupal also comes preloaded with a lot of community tools. Out of the gate, based on its core, Drupal has very capable user management, permissions, and roles. This means that Drupal has some incredible capabilities for giving different users (both those updating your website on the administrator side and those contributing to your website from the community membership side) different editing capabilities. For example, one individual can have just submission abilities, while another can have editing abilities, while another can just see different submissions but not edit or approve.

The biggest perk of using Drupal, however, is its ability to scale.

Since the National Hemophilia Foundation and Jobs for the Future are both large nonprofit organizations with multiple web properties and complex needs in terms of website functionality, Drupal is a good choice because the ability to customize it is virtually endless.



HOW DOES DRUPAL SCALE?

The best way to explain this, is to compare WordPress to a Transformer toy and Drupal to Lego.



A Transformer is a complete toy. It can be a robot or a truck. Heck! You can even connect some of them to make a super robot.

Lego, on the other hand, isn't particularly exciting straight out of the box. It also hurts when you step on a piece! But, and this is a big but, if you have the time and patience, you can literally build anything out of lego. Sure, you have to have the right pieces, or be willing to go get them. And, you need to commit the time to building your amazing creation. But, in the end, it's usually worth it.

If you can think it, you can usually build it on Drupal.

This may lead you to believe that Drupal is the only choice for a community website. It's not.

WHEN IS WORDPRESS THE BEST CHOICE?

WordPress tends to offer a better User Experience on the administrator side for non developers. Cori Carl, Director of The Caregiver Space oversaw the nonprofit's shift from Drupal to WordPress a few years ago. She notes that her "team found WordPress easier to maintain inhouse than Drupal." Carl goes on to explain that:

"Our biggest priority is ensuring everything can be built and maintained in-house, although we're always striving to make sure the UX [user experience] is easy for our very diverse community. We have an online magazine, where professionals and caregivers can submit stories, in addition to our BuddyPress forums, groups, profiles, and messaging. WP [WordPress] allows us to use affordable tools to provide our members with all the features we need without a huge amount of custom coding on my part."

For many nonprofit website administrators, the ability to edit everything in house, with limited assistance from developers is a huge bonus. Carl does note, however, that the website's "BuddyPress and bbPress online community tools can be difficult for some of [the community's] members to navigate" and that they do not always have the best spam filtering capabilities. As such, the organization "recently created a private Facebook group to better connect with members who found BuddyPress and bbPress confusing." You might decide to use WordPress when:

- Many nonprofit's find that WordPress gives them all the tools they need, and this may be the case for you.
- Your organization's web administrators are not tech savvy:
- Wordpress is designed to be used by non technical people. The built in dashboard allows you to control all of the behind-the-scene details of managing your site, and truly is easy to use and navigate. This makes it simple to delegate access to your admin users based on the level of access you would like them to have in your site.
- Your website needs are not overly complex
- Other than the ability to comment, submit posts, and update basic information in a member profile, the capabilities you would like your website to have are going to be minimal. For example, you will not need to show users different information depending on their preferences, nor, will users need to filter through a multi-level resource repository.
- You don't mind paying for plug-ins.

The WordPress community is significantly larger than the Drupal community. This is great when it comes to more individuals working towards bettering the platform. However, it also means that many plugins are commercialized. Thus, instead of everyone in the community working towards bettering a single plug-in that does one task, multiple individuals are working on multiple plug-ins that do the same task.



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IT ALL COMES DOWN TO THIS:

Basically, WordPress can do just about anything Drupal can do. Wordpress might require jumping through a few more hoops, which, when you are working on a website with complex needs, may end up costing you more money in the long run than simply starting with Drupal.

So, in conclusion, both systems are excellent choices for your nonprofit's community website. It really just depends on how complex your needs are. The more seamless and comprehensive you would like your target audience's experience on your website to be, the more likely it is that your website will require complex capabilities, and the more likely it is that a framework like Drupal will be a better fit. If you and your organization have simpler needs, with budget and timeline typically playing a major role in your decision process, then Wordpress could be the better fit.

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