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Pantheon + Sandstorm®

The CMS Showdown

10 Key Questions When Making Your Choice

May 21, 2025

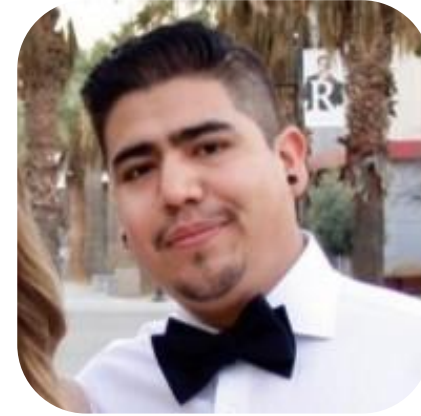1

Hi, we're Sandstorm and Pantheon

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Fun facts about Sandstorm®

Accessibility-certified, creative technology agency for 25+ years for **purpose-driven brands**

Deep expertise with **associations, NFPs, higher education and healthcare**

Certifications: CPACC (accessibility), Pantheon, AWS Cloud, Drupal, DEIB, and WBENC (women-owned)

Team leads with **decades of experience**

Interdisciplinary team: UX/UI, strategy, technology, data, AI

UX practice started by **Ph.D in human factors** in 2006

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Fun facts about Pantheon

PANTHEON™

All-in-one **Open Source** web infrastructure, workflow, governance platform

Providing everything your web team needs to deliver **fast**, **secure**, **exceptional** digital experiences.

Managed containerized Infrastructure

Centralized portfolio management with granular permission control

Modern workflows that unlock developer efficiency & collaboration

Over **700,000** WordPress, Drupal, and Next.js sites trust Pantheon.

Enterprise Security
- Google Cloud Platform
- Isolated Resources
- SOC2
- DDoS Protection
- Immutable code

GOALS & TAKEAWAYS

- Examine leading open source vs licensed options

- Know the CMS/DXP landscape, major players and options

- Understanding of the differences

- Proof points for making a switch

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10 Key Questions When Selecting Your CMS

1 Philosophy
Open source or licensed?

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Which camp are you?
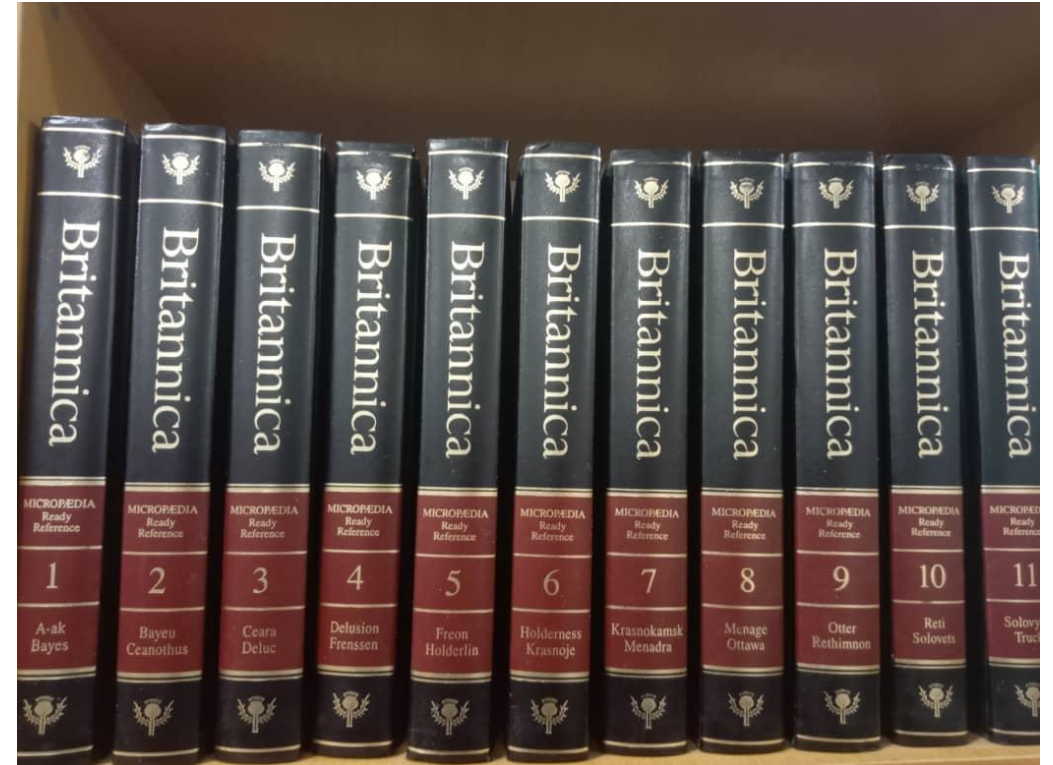
Image by Meritkosy

Open Source

- **Limitless number of contributors** extending functionality, identifying bugs and vulnerabilities, and innovating.
- **You do not have one number to call** or one company accountable for the core application.
- **No licensing fees**.

Licensed

- **One accountable company.**
- **Feature development driven by company** and therefore market demand and profitability.
- **Licensing fees** that you do not control.

Open Source CMSs power **over 45% of the web.**

https://w3techs.com/technologies/overview/content_management

2 DXP
All-In-One or Best-of-Breed?

The DXP Concept

- **Digital Experience Platform**

- **Fully integrated suite** to manage digital experiences across multiple channels

- **Unlocking advanced integration** of tools within the same ecosystem

- **All in one solution**

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Composable Stack

- **Best-of-Breed**

- **Leveraging hand-picked tools and systems** to create a comprehensive and efficient technology stack

- **Enabling faster integration,** greater efficiency, and flexibility

- **No Vendor Lock-in**

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Ownership

- If you need to make a **change or cut costs tomorrow,** what are your options?
- Where is your **data stored?** and who manages that storage?
- Do you **own your technology?**

Adobe Experience Manager is the most used web DXP with over 35,000 sites currently online.

https://trends.builtwith.com/cms/Adobe-Experience-Manager

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The Contenders
Who makes the short list?

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There are over **800 content management systems**.

https://w3techs.com/technologies/overview/content_management

Small or Specialized Options

…..a discussion for another day

SaaS Builders
- Wix
- Squarespace
- Webflow

E-Commerce
- Shopify
- BigCommerce
- Magento

Headless & Static
- Contentful, Sanity, Strapi, Storyblok, Hygraph
- Static site generators like Gatsby, Hugo or NextJS

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Enterprise Level Options

Open Source, PHP

Licensed, .Net

Licensed, Java

Focus for Today

Popular options for nonprofits, associations, healthcare, and higher education.

The most widely used CMS.

Accessible from both a content entry and development standpoint. Scale and customization are secondary considerations.

Well-suited for sites with **structured data and big content needs**.

Built for scale, flexibility and reliability.

A **feature-rich CMS** with a licensed model and robust personalization engine at a **mid-price range** relative to other .NET options.

4 **Popularity**
What is their market share?

Why does it matter? { How easy will it be to find a partner or hire a developer?

Why does
it matter? **{** How much investment
is going into product?

Popularity

CMS	Year Created	CMS Market Share	% of Websites	# of Websites	Community Size
WordPress	2003	61.3%	43.6%	810 million	Over 475 million users worldwide
Drupal	2001	1.8%	0.8%	578,566	Over 1.3 million registered members
Sitefinity	2002	0.085%	0.085%	4,689	Engaged developer and user community

Sources:

https://www.mobiloud.com/blog/wordpress-market-share
https://invedus.com/blog/wordpress-statistics-you-should-know/
https://www.marketingscoop.com/blog/drupal-usage-statistics-2024-the-ultimate-guide/

https://w3techs.com/technologies/details/cm-drupal
https://webtechsurvey.com/technology/sitefinity
https://www.wmtips.com/technologies/cms/sitefinity/

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The Roadmap
Where are they headed?

Target Audience

WordPress

"For everyone"

Drupal

"For ambitious
site builders"

Sitefinity

"For smart
marketers and
agile developers"

Keeping Your Finger on the Pulse

WordPress

State of the Word
Most recent:
https://wordpress.org/news/2024/12/state-of-the-word-2024-legacy-innovation-and-community/

https://wordpress.org/about/roadmap/

WordCamps

Drupal

DrupalCon Driesnotes
Most recent:
https://dri.es/state-of-drupal-presentation-march-2025

https://new.drupal.org/home

DrupalCon and Camps

Sitefinity

Release Notes
https://www.progress.com/sitefinity-cms/whats-new

https://community.progress.com/

Digital Momentum Summit

What's Next?

WordPress

- Prototyping sandbox
- Collaborative editing
- Speculative loading
- Improvements to theme management
- AI-powered site building

Drupal

- Reducing barrier to entry through Drupal CMS, Recipes, and a theme library
- Making the best layout & content editor experience
- AI-assisted admin

Sitefinity

- Packaged AI Service add-on
- Integrated CDP (Insights) for personalization
- Azure AI Translator integration

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6 Plugins, Modules & Add Ons
How will you add functionality?

The universe of plugins is **large** and they tend towards the **all-in-one** approach.
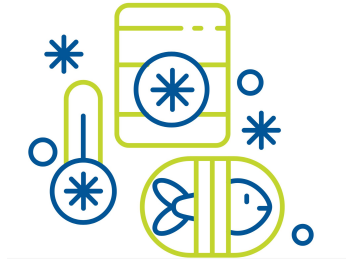
Quality varies widely.

With a **framework approach**, Drupal maintains a lean core that can be extended with modules.

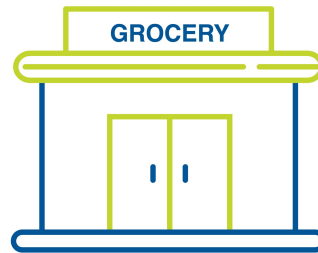Modules are **granular** and **strictly for functionality (not theme)**.

The universe of extensions is **fixed.** There are typically **additional charges** for add-ons.

The **quality and consistency is good**.

WordPress would be unlimited frozen dinners.

Drupal would be a grocery store.

Sitefinity would be a meal kit like Blue Apron.

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Quality of Life
Will the choice make you popular with content editors?

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The Good

- Familiar for many
- **Intuitive** content admin
- Easy access to **"adding" functionality** to enhance admin
- Access to **lots of features** (...there's a plug-in for that)
- Abundance of Googleable resources for troubleshooting
- **AI roadmap**: AI plug-ins for page building, content editing, creation

The Meh

○ Reliance on **third-party plugins** for modern functionality (often involving "pro"/subscription fees)

CLIENT EXAMPLE

Recently assisted with CMS selection for a physician association that was on a dated version of Sitecore and frustrated by their limited ability to make changes.

In selecting WordPress, one stakeholder commented:

"It's at least infinitely Googleable. I can figure out almost anything in WordPress."

The Good

- **Rich content admin** experience
- Best for sites with **structured data needs** (multiple content types)
- Menu management coupled with page editing
- Unlimited flexibility
- **AI roadmap: AI-enablement** for content creation, contextual recommendations, page building

The Meh

- Higher **initial learning curve** (often higher level of complexity)
- Content admin experience can feel less intuitive

CLIENT EXAMPLE

A site sponsored by one of the **largest software companies** in the world, assessed Kentico versus Drupal. Their design called for structured content and a robust taxonomy-driven experience.

We scoped the development effort and licensing costs across both and **Drupal emerged as the lower cost and better fit** option.

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Progress® Sitefinity™

The Good

- Easily **identifiable site content structure**
- **Drag and drop** layout building
- Able to intuit "**where everything lives**" easier than some other CMS options
- **AI roadmap**: generative AI capabilities, optimization, translation

The Meh

- Admin experience can feel **outdated**
- Separation between content and presentation **can feel disconnected**
- Creating structured content and/or **templates means cloning a model page** and relying on widgets

CLIENT EXAMPLE

In almost a half dozen cases, we have worked on rebuilds for existing Sitefinity sites.

In each case, the client was satisfied with the product, had developed **in-house expertise and familiarity**, and were primarily looking to better **leverage its features** with the new site iterations.

8 Layout Management
Will the choice empower content editors?

- **Blocks**: Native feature built into Gutenberg, the default editor. Emphasis on basic page building and ease of use. Customizable with code knowledge.

- **WP Bakery**: Plugin offering a page building experience without full theme control. Can be powerful or overwhelming and create opportunities for inconsistency.

- **Divi and Elementor**: Theme and page builders that offer an omniscient site building experience. Ideal for sites that require fewer customizations. Can be similarly cumbersome as plugin-based builders.

- **Layout Builder**: Define columns, page widths, and add shared or custom blocks with a drag and drop interface

- **Paragraphs**: Add custom elements within regular page editing experience and standard page width and columns.

- **Experience Builder**: Coming soon - promises to marry the best of Layout Builder and Paragraphs with a design system and AI.

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- **Use widgets** to create a layout
- **Clone the layout** as desired for a template
- **Intuitive** drag and drop page editor
- Recent version allows you to **modify widgets directly** within the page editing experience

9 What about security?

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PRECONCEPTION:

Open source is inherently risky.
Anyone can view the source code, so hackers can easily find vulnerabilities.

REALITY:

Transparency **allows thousands of developers and security experts to inspect, test, and patch vulnerabilities** — often faster than proprietary platforms.

PRECONCEPTION:

If the plugin is open source, **it must be trustworthy.**

REALITY:

Not all plugins are created equal. Some are poorly coded or abandoned, introducing vulnerabilities even if the core CMS is secure.

Security Landscape

Feature	WordPress	Drupal	Sitefinity
Security Philosophy	Community-driven, plugin-based	Security by design	Vendor-driven, enterprise-grade
Out-of-the-box Security	Moderate	High	Very High
Plugin/Extension Risk	High	Moderate	Low
Security Team & Advisories	Yes (core only)	Yes (core + modules)	Managed by Progress (vendor)
Access Control Features	Basic roles	Granular permissions	Advanced role-based access
Enterprise Readiness	With effort	Strong	Strong

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Dollars

What is the cost of ownership?

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Open source is
free like a puppy

ON THE OTHER HAND

It's nice to **control where you make investments**.

It's nice to **not be beholden** to changes in license fees.

	WordPress	Drupal	Sitefinity
Pros	Ease of use for content administrators DIY development	Structured content, taxonomy, permissions Management of layout Security first approach	Good option if you have .NET skills in-house and/or an organizational preference for licensed software
Cons	Not built for scale or complexity Large market share makes it a popular target for security threats	Requires developers New thing to learn for many content administrators	Mediocre content editor experience Recurring licensing fees Fixed development path and universe of plugins

Questions….?

Let's connect!

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