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Avoid Santa Claus approach to content management

By [Gerry McGovern](#)

The Santa Claus approach to content management creates a content management software wish list. It believes in the magic of technology to sweep away any and every problem. Typically, those who believe in Santa don't believe in defining their processes, or figuring out just why they need a website in the first place.

Just what is a portal? I've spent the last couple of years asking this question. Nobody can come up with anything approaching a reasonable answer. Even people who are implementing portal technology can't fully explain what exactly the benefits are. So, I've come up with a definition of a portal: 'A portal is a website that costs you four times more.'

Peter Drucker has written about how we have spent the last fifty years focusing on the 'T' in information technology (IT). Drucker believes that we will spend the next fifty years focusing on the 'I.'

Taking a technology approach to content management is like writing a letter to Santa. The letter is full of requests for all the coolest tools. It asks for everything. The toys must integrate with this and that. They have to be cutting edge, robust and scaleable. They have to be personalized and customized.

Often the only software that meets everything on the wish list is big, expensive, cumbersome, and really difficult to use. Content management software should begin with the needs of the editor and writer, not with the demands of the IT manager.

It is editors and writers who have to use the software every day. These are the people whose job efficiency this software will have a significant impact on. The specification should therefore start from the perspective of helping them maximize their productivity.

One thing needs to be understood about editors and writers. As a group, they are techno phobic. Unless software is really—and I mean really—easy to use, they don't want to know.

If you want to successfully implement content management software you need to first and foremost design for their needs. In my experience, editors and writers are often the last group that gets considered.

"Gerry's insight into web content management has set a new standard by which we will be building our next generation web content management style guide."

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Many organizations still buy the software first and then try and figure out what the problem is. I know of one Fortune 500 company that is ripping out its content management software and going back to HTML.

I keep meeting communications managers lumbered with content management software that doesn't fit their needs. It was bought by someone in IT trying to do the right thing. Unfortunately, they hadn't even considered the needs of the very people who would use the software on a day-to-day basis.

Some people have no real understanding of what content is. They see it like coal. They see software as a digger that will more efficiently move the coal from one place to another. So, to them, content management (CM) is all about the 'M.' It's about management, storage, automation, cheap delivery.

It's time to start thinking about the 'C'—the content. It's time to start seeing content as an asset, not a cost. And that means seeing the people who create your greatest content as your greatest asset.

Technology can be a great enabler. But remember, it is your writers and editors that you should be enabling.

[Gerry McGovern](#)



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