

7 ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF A CONTENT DISTRIBUTION SOLUTION

Organizations that create, sell and manually distribute their own materials often struggle to get vital content in front of wider audiences. The process needs to be faster, more affordable, and more secure.

Digitizing and distributing materials via a content distribution solution (CDS) get high-value materials in front of a wider audience without increasing production costs. And, organizations can rest assured that their content is in a protected format. This stops the risks of pirating, re-selling, or plagiarism better than printed materials.

This is just the beginning of how a CDS can benefit content-creating organizations.

A CDS does more than distribute digitized content. It's a sure-fire way to:

- increase engagement with original material.
- get real-time feedback on which content purchasers prefer.
- keep materials updated without the headache of re-printing them.

To learn more about the benefits of digital content distribution, check out this white paper: [“Costs are Down, Revenue is Up: Digital Content Distribution Makes it Possible”](#).

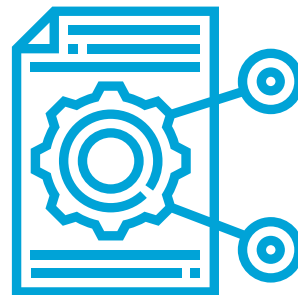
How Do You Know Which CDS is Best for Your Organization?

If your organization has decided to start distributing content digitally, you'll need to ensure that you select a content distribution solution that best suits your organization's needs, goals, and projected growth.

That might seem like a daunting task, but here's a hint: Without any one of the seven elements outlined below, any so-called solution is not truly a solution at all! Each component listed is vital to the success of your digital content distribution program.

The seven must-have components of any CDS are:

- Integration
- Ease of editing
- Security
- Metrics
- Scalability
- An easy-to-use UI
- Offline accessibility



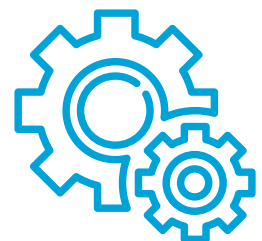
The Seven Essential Components of a Content Distribution Solution

1 Integration with Existing Processes

Overcoming existing processes is one of the biggest uphill battles any organizational change faces. Selecting a CDS that seamlessly integrates into your organization's established processes for creating, updating, and distributing materials will make it easier to start including digital content in your offerings.

Remember, having digital content available doesn't have to mean that materials are only available in that format! Making digital versions accessible to those who have recently purchased printed materials is a great way to introduce digital content to your clientele. Or, consider allowing purchasers to choose their preferred distribution format at the time of purchase. This is another avenue for modernizing distribution and decreasing costs without fully eliminating the availability of printed materials. You may also find that pairing digitally-distributed content with in-person courses, or training that typically require supplemental printed materials such as a workbook, is another way to smoothly begin the transition to digitally-available content.

Finally, the CDS should work seamlessly with the technology your organization already uses to create content. By eliminating the hassle of learning a new platform, the change to digital distribution can be as easy as hitting "export" instead of "print."



2 Content Should Be Easy to Edit



It's important to select a CDS in which editing and updating content is easy. Whether as simple a task as fixing a typo or as major as adding a new section to a textbook, your CDS should make it easy to update content without unexpected expenditure or negatively impacted revenue.

The ability to keep content fresh without the headaches and costs of reformatting, re-printing, and re-shipping printed materials is invaluable to your bottom line. No more stale stock and no more eating the price of sending updated materials to clients with ongoing contracts! Expect your profit margins to grow as you keep the value of your content intact rather than allowing it to depreciate. Purchasers will be more likely to extend their contracts in order to retain access to updated versions of materials that they already know and trust. And they'll be more likely to purchase additional content from your organization in the future, with the confidence that it will retain its value over time.

Easily updating and continually releasing new versions of materials at little-to-no cost also helps combat the external reselling of older printed materials. Each update that you're able to quickly make to the digital content will decrease the perceived value of the outdated printed versions being sold by unaffiliated third parties or former students. After all, who would buy version 2.1 in printed format (and wait for it to be delivered!) when version 3.3 can be bought and accessed on a smartphone in a matter of minutes?

3 Security and DRM Are All-Important



Reject any CDS that puts your organization's content at risk of piracy, theft, or reselling. When examining a CDS, ask pointed questions about the security measures that the platform provides to keep content safe.

Additionally, ask about Digital Rights Management (DRM) options that can allow content to continue to be accessed in limited ways by purchasers after courses or certifications have been completed. This will increase the value of your digital content to purchasers without putting the content itself at risk of being lost or resold.

4 Make Sure You Get Metrics



Knowing which parts of your organization's content is being engaged with the most, how often it's being engaged with, and for how long, is invaluable information that can advise your business goals and the design of future materials.

Unless you plan to ask purchasers to send back their ear-marked and highlighted books, it's impossible to know which aspects of printed formats are being read or studied! With the metrics provided to you by a CDS, you'll see which content is most popular, and be able to make informed business decisions about which topics to expand, eliminate, or update.

5 Factor for Organizational Growth, Goals and Dreams



If digitizing existing content is just one step in a larger digital transformation, you'll need a scalable solution that won't have to be replaced in a few years' time with another platform. Growth opportunities might include plans to release interactive or fully-online courses, for example.

Choose a CDS that enables the richer future educational experiences your organization is envisioning. Don't overlook small details, such as:

- if a CDS has a limited number of licenses tied to your contract.
- if there's a limit to the amount or type of content you can upload and distribute.
- if there's a limited number of changes that can be made to uploaded content.

Select a platform that works best with the organizational goals you're anticipating. Even if it's something of a pipe dream, make sure your CDS can grow with you.

6 Don't Forget About the Users



Any CDS that has a difficult or subpar user experience will struggle with adoption and use. Even if a CDS fulfills all other requirements from a business standpoint, if clientele don't engage with your digitized content because of difficulties with the platform, your digital distribution efforts will be futile. Even worse, it could undermine your market share by driving digital content purchasers to other, more user-friendly providers.

Take the time to test any CDS you're considering as a user. Is the user interface easy to understand and operate? Does it use cryptic iconography, or does it feel familiar and comfortable? Does it offer the same functions and benefits that a client would get from printed material, such as the ability to mark pages, take or share notes, and highlight sections? Is the platform ADA-compliant and does it provide alternate modes for learners with disabilities?

7 Always Available



Finally, it's important to ensure that any CDS you select allows content to be available to clients even when they're offline. Your materials need to be accessible to purchasers at any time – even when internet connection is spotty or unavailable.

By removing potential barriers to the consumption of your materials, you'll keep your expertise and thought leadership front-and-center with your clientele. This will further establish your organization as an invaluable resource, and increase the likelihood of return customers in the future.

Conclusion

Next Steps: Finding the Right CDS for Your Organization

Finding the right CDS is a necessary next step for any organization creating and distributing content. It's not a matter of if content should be digitized and digitally distributed, so much a matter of when the process can start.

Here's the truth of it: the sooner, the better. Why wait to save on costs, get high-value content in front of a wider audience, and prove once-and-for-all that your organization is leading its industry?

Now that you've familiarized yourself with which aspects of a CDS are vital to the success of your organization's digital content distribution, it's time to select the solution that's right for you.

Let's Go Digital

Choose an established digital distribution partner and platform that ensures that you'll deliver exceptional digital experiences while reducing costs by selecting Bookshelf by VitalSource.

Bookshelf is the world's most-used platform for distributing, accessing, and consuming content just like your organization creates. Built on over twenty years of experience with all types of digital learning transformations, Bookshelf is a top-of-the-line CDS that provides security, analytics, and integration with the existing processes needed for digital content distribution to be a success. Plus, its industry-leading features such as offline accessibility and interactive content elements ensure your content is staying fresh, ahead of the curve, and keeping audiences engaged.

Would you like to see what
Bookshelf can do for you?

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