Best Practices for SEO in dotCMS

How dotCMS **Facilitates Enterprise SEO**

dotcms

2018

An Enterprise CMS should facilitate SEO,

not obstruct it.

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Introduction

Optimizing web content for search engines such as Google and Bing **has become a critical part of every marketer's daily routine.** However, while Search Engine Optimization (SEO) practices have evolved from the meta tags and static HTML of yesterday to the quality content-focused strategies of today — most content management systems have failed to keep pace, leaving marketing teams with inadequate tools when it comes to SEO.

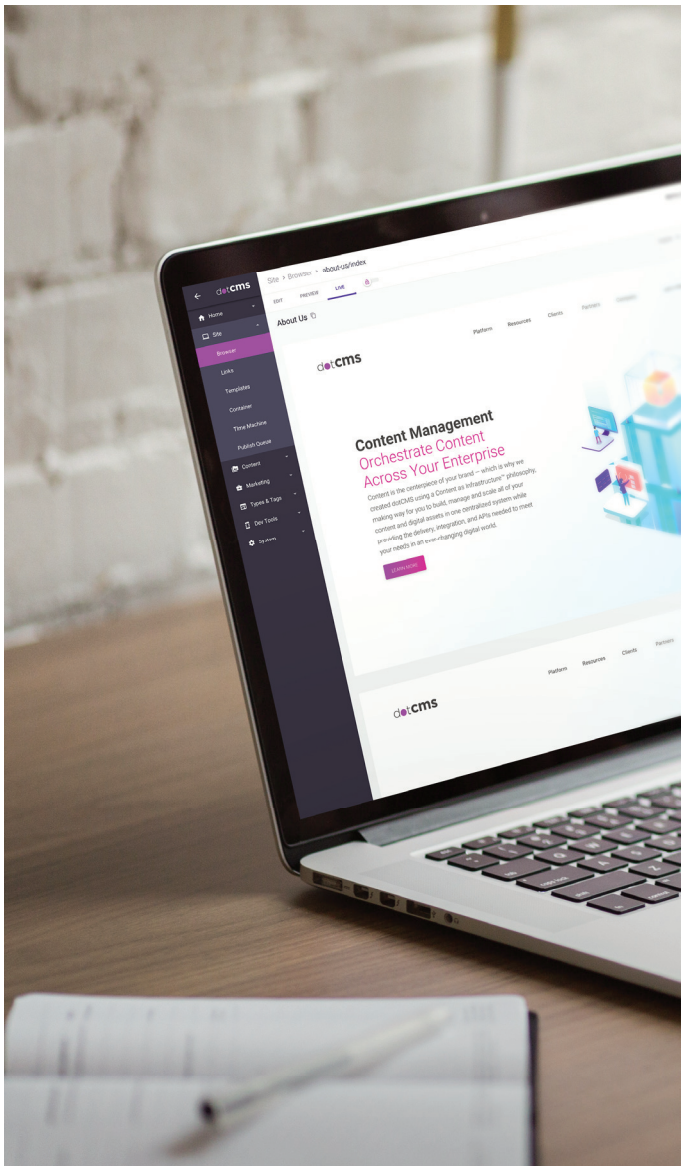
dotCMS

has been built from the ground up to **support SEO strategies** that don't just make websites more appealing to search engines, but humans as well.

SEO in 2019 & Beyond

Today, digital marketers need to do more than ever before, in less time. **The speed of social media and the internet in general means that marketers have to constantly innovate and iterate in order to stay relevant.** Therefore, business and marketing teams have no desire to be bothered with the intricate science of SEO, meta tags, and URL structures - they have bigger digital fish to fry.

And yet, marketing teams want their content to rank higher against prioritized searches than their competition in order to drive traffic and digital experience goals. Therefore, these **teams need a content management solution that automatically empowers them to create search optimized content** without having to worry about the finer details.



But of course, we must also weigh the "mechanics" of producing search-friendly content with the developments in early 2011, when Google released its "Panda" (or Farmer) algorithm updates. While it's not new, we know that marketers still struggle to focus on the quality of their content when it comes to meeting their content marketing goals. It's no longer good enough to produce a lot of content — marketers now have to make sure that they are creating high quality content.

This also means that if they are going to optimize their content for search, they need close alignment with **their Web Content Management solution.** More than just producing clean, readable, and usable content with the appropriate meta tags — **it must be capable of optimizing engagement and "shareability" across social networks.**

A well-implemented & capable CMS tool can help organizations strike the right balance between the quality and technology sides of SEO.

In this whitepaper, we'll first address:

- CMS best practices in SEO from a business and process perspective
- CMS best practices on the technical/mechanical side of SEO
- How dotCMS can help to solve some of these challenges

4 Tried and Tested SEO Strategies for the Enterprise

Much has been made of the technical elements of SEO (meta tags, HTML, and so forth), but in reality,

SEO

is merely the practice of **improving the quantity and quality of your traffic to your website through optimizing** the overall relevance of your site from the perspective of search engines.

Said more simply,

Search Engine Optimization comes down to two things:

01.

Firstly, it's about making your **website friendlier for search engines to find and index content** (we'll be covering this in the next few pages).

02.

And secondly, producing **quality content that encourages people to share and link to it on other highly ranked websites** - thereby improving your "importance" or relevance in search queries performed on search engines.

SEO Tips: here are some best practices for the second piece of the puzzle:

#01. Quality (with quantity)

While the focus on quantity has gone down — it's still safe to say that, assuming a level of quality, the more of it you can produce, the better.

You should publish a lot of good, quality content.

Google loves quality content, and **big sites are (in general) loved** better than smaller websites.

So, a worthy CMS focuses on helping you optimize your content and facilitating great content by providing an **easy-to-use interface and a flexible workflow, which dotCMS does through its NoCode philosophy**[1&2].

SEO Tips: here are some best practices for the second piece of the puzzle:

#02. Target real people in your audience

Certainly, a high-density of keywords in your content can help you rank higher for those terms — but if you focus too much on this, you'll end up generating unreadable content. For example, this sentence:

"Java software is good software for you because it is java and java is good."

Would theoretically rank higher than this sentence:

"Java software is good for you because it provides a number of benefits."

However, one doesn't read well to humans. And, with so much focus on quality and engagement

–

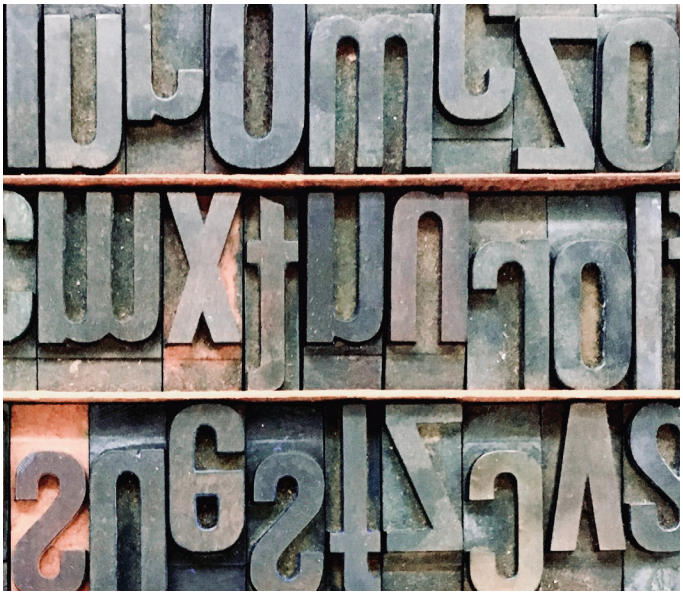
the best practice is to avoid stuffing your content full of keywords, and instead, maximize the readability for humans.

This ultimately will encourage your readers to share and link to your content.

Now, no CMS will make you a better copywriter, but a good platform should provide you with some insight into keywords and phrases through their reporting. Or alternatively, it should offer integration with third-party tools like Acrolinx[3] (which dotCMS integrates with) - to support keyword research and rankings.

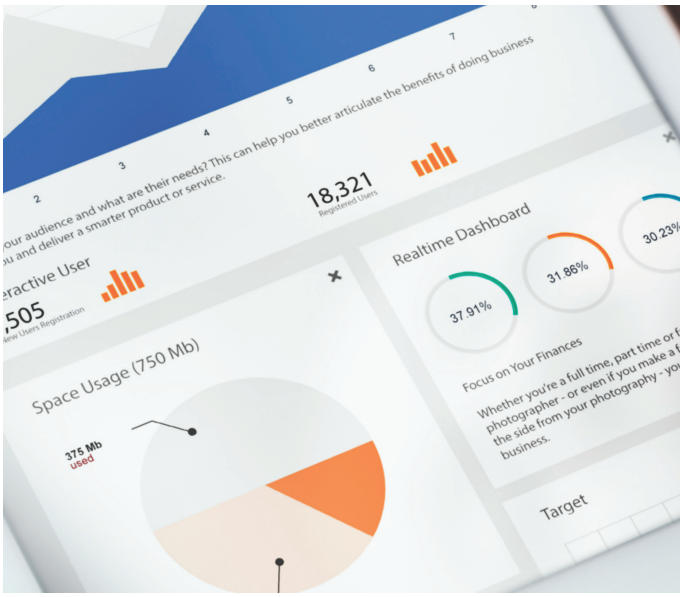
SEO Tips: here are some best practices for the second piece of the puzzle:

#03. Manage a select number of keywords and key phrases



You will never be all things to everyone - and you'll never, ever rank #1 for all the keywords you want to target. So, you will want to **prioritize what keywords and key phrases that mean something to your product and customers.** Ask yourself what are your customers looking for? What are the most popular search terms that people are using to come to your site? Where do you rank for those keywords?

This is where a good CMS can help. If you can integrate with **Google Analytics**



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you can pull in the data of how your customers are finding you and use that to prioritize the keywords where you want to rank.

SEO Tips: here are some best practices for the second piece of the puzzle:

#04. Go the extra mile

In addition to all the more mechanical SEO strateiges, **it's always good to experiment and try new things** — especially when more and more variables than ever seem to count toward ranking above your competitors. Try setting up a YouTube and/or Instagram channel and funneling some links to content in there. Or, consider setting up microsites that focus on different keywords and phrases where you want to rank higher.

At dotCMS, we have some microsite examples that we use in our PPC ad campaigns:

Keyword(s)	Landing page/microsite
Headless, CMS	https://dotcms.com/headless-cms
Intranet	https://dotcms.com/portal-cms
CMS	https://dotcms.com/content-management-system
DXP	https://dotcms.com/digital-experience-platform

SEO Strategies for Enterprise

01. Quality (with quantity)

Publish a lot of good, quality content.

dotCMS has a NoCode philosophy that helps you optimize and facilitate your content.

02. Manage a select number of keywords & key phrases

Prioritize the keyword & key phrases.

dotCMS integrates with Google Analytics to pull data of how your customers are finding you.

03. Target real people in your audience

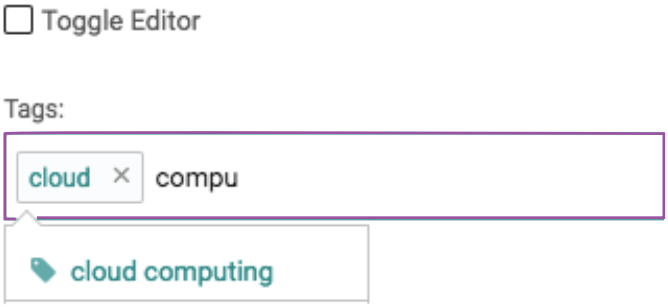
Avoid a content full of keywords, & maximize the readability for users.

dotCMS integrates with Acrolinx - which support keyword research and rankings.

04. Go the extra mile

It's always good to experiment and try new things:

- Try adding links to content in channels like YouTube and Instagram.
- Or set uo microsites that focus on keywords and phrases that you want to rank higher on.



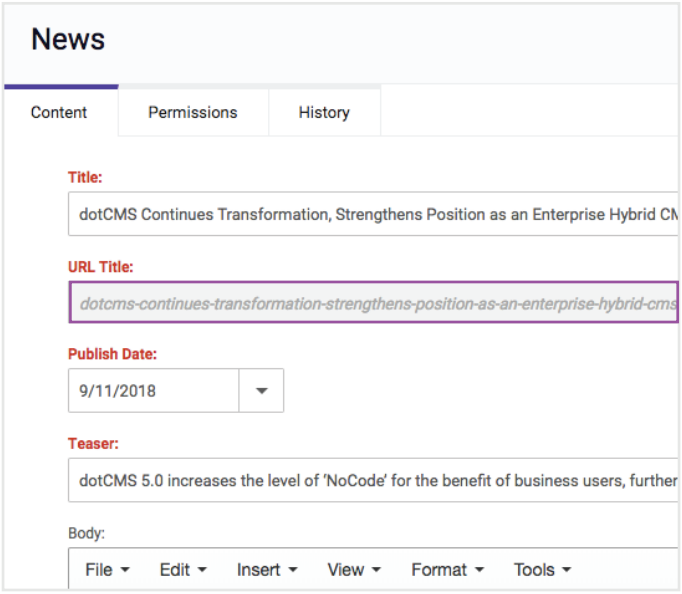
10 Winning CMS Features That Support Enterprise SEO

From a mechanical perspective, a good web content management solution should simply "get out of the way" of the search optimization process. In other words, there are best practice functions that any good CMS should facilitate without requiring the marketing team to focus on them.

As long as your content strategy is on the money, **your CMS will handle the science behind ranking well on Google, Bing, and other search engines.**

#01. Full control of all content tags

A good best practice for optimizing content for search engines is to **ensure that you have clear and optimized title tags on your content.** Further, if titles to documents are automatically created by the CMS — the structure of those auto-generated tags should be optimized for search (e.g. automatically truncate to less than 70 characters). This also includes other page tags and the ability to insert (manually or automatically based on your requirements or page type) the "noindex" or other types of tags that will affect which content is indexed by Google.



#02. Full control over HTML headers and formatting is key

HTML and its quality is still a large part of how Google determines good, quality content. So, ensuring that the **CMS provides for full control over H1, H2 and other formatting tags** (like meta description tags) is a crucial piece of any good content management solution. In the age of AI, **dotCMS offers an integration with Amazon Rekognition**[4] that helps to automatically generate tags at scale for video and image assets using deep-learning technology.

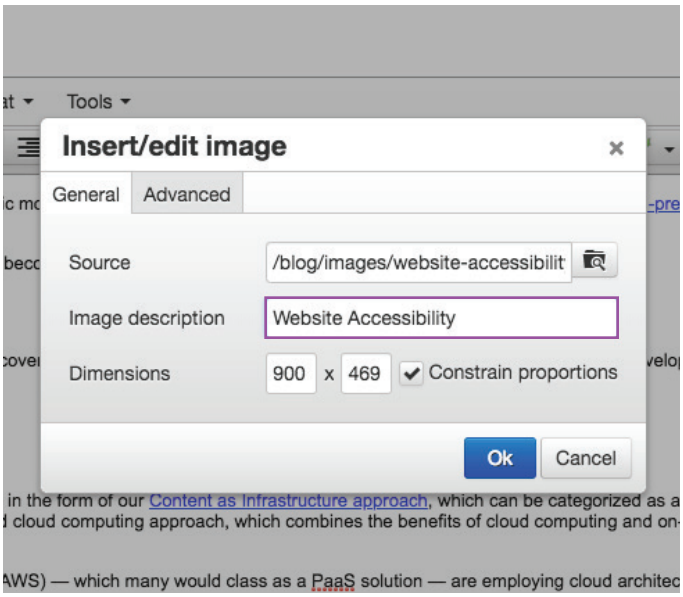
#03. Full control over the URL construction

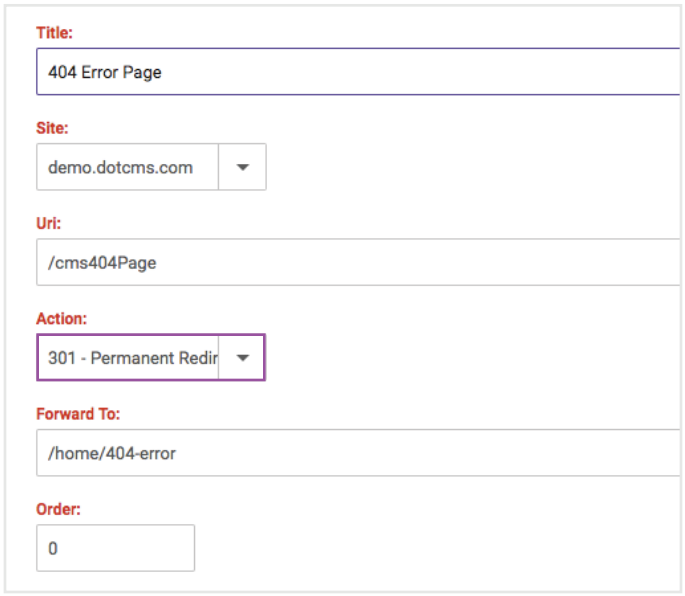
To focus on both quality and keyword phrases, the ultimate URL of any piece of content produced by the CMS should be manageable as part of the content within the CMS. This includes the ability to create shortened and/or boutique type URLs. In short — **the CMS should allow for full customization of the URL used. dotCMS supports the tools to optimize ranking through:**

- SEO-friendly URLs are generated automatically[5]
- URLs can be overwritten by a CMS user
- Vanity URLs are supported[6]

#04. Alt text is just another piece of content in the CMS

For both searchability, as well as accessibility, **providing alt tags on images is a best practice.** With any good SEO optimized CMS, users should have the ability to **add alt tags to any asset,** especially images. Additionally, the CMS should provide for the ability to **have default "auto text" for images** that can be overridden by the end user.





#05. A good CMS enables you to manage 301 redirects

301 redirects are the **best way to ensure that Google gives credit for content that has moved and doesn't penalize for any content that has been deleted.** Your CMS should not get in the way of your management of 301 redirect for any piece of content that is moved or changed. And a good CMS should have a tool that allows end users to create those 301 redirects if necessary[7&8].

#06. The CMS prevents duplicate content creation

While the issue of being penalized for duplicate content on your site has been overhyped, it's still a best practice to **avoid duplicate content where you can.** This is especially true when search engine indexes pull in the entirety of the content — including HTML elements[9].

A CMS should completely separate these concerns and **only index the content and not the HTML container within it.** Additionally, the CMS should also give the ability to set the canonical URL for any piece of content, informing Google that this is the version that should take precedence. dotCMS is a content-centric CMS where you **create content once and repurpose multiple times across the websites you manage from a single dotCMS instance.**

#07. XML Sitemaps are fundamental for Google

A key practice for ensuring that Google indexes all of your content is the **creation of an XML sitemap**[10]**.** With this, you can create a standard way for Google to index and present your content through its search engine. A well implemented SEO optimized **CMS** will facilitate this best practice by **automatically creating and publishing an XML sitemap, as the content is managed.**

#08. Social media integration

Content that is shared, and shared often, **has become a critical component to how search engines are ranking content.** Making sure that your CMS can integrate with social channels by publishing content in a way that helps populate your social feeds, and in a way that facilitates the sharing of the content on your site, is vital.

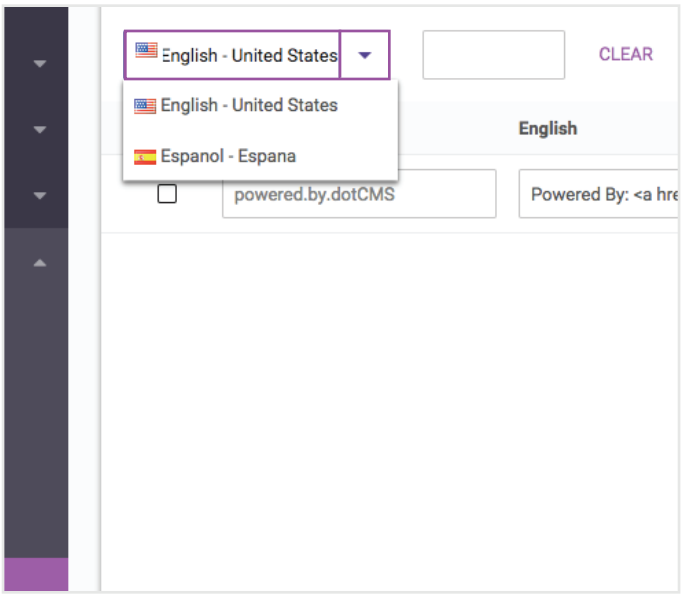
#09. Speed is the currency

Google is constantly tweaking their algorithm — and website speed is more important than ever. It's clear that faster sites don't just improve user experience, they can also increase search rankings. So, ensuring that your **SEO-optimized CMS[11] can deliver your site with absolutely no delays,** no matter how big or busy it gets, is key in determining a good search optimized content strategy. For more, check out dotCMS's white paper on high-performance content delivery[12].

#10. Manage multiple languages

Best practices suggest that the management of the **same content in different languages** should be presented through subdirectories or through different main or sub-domains and the creation of SEO-friendly URLs should also be supported[13].

A well-implemented and SEO optimized WCMS should be able to **manage content in a way that makes sense to the organization** (e.g. by section, or product or even department) **but publish the content to the best, and most optimized,** method of language hierarchies.



10 Winning CMS Features

That Support Enterprise SEO

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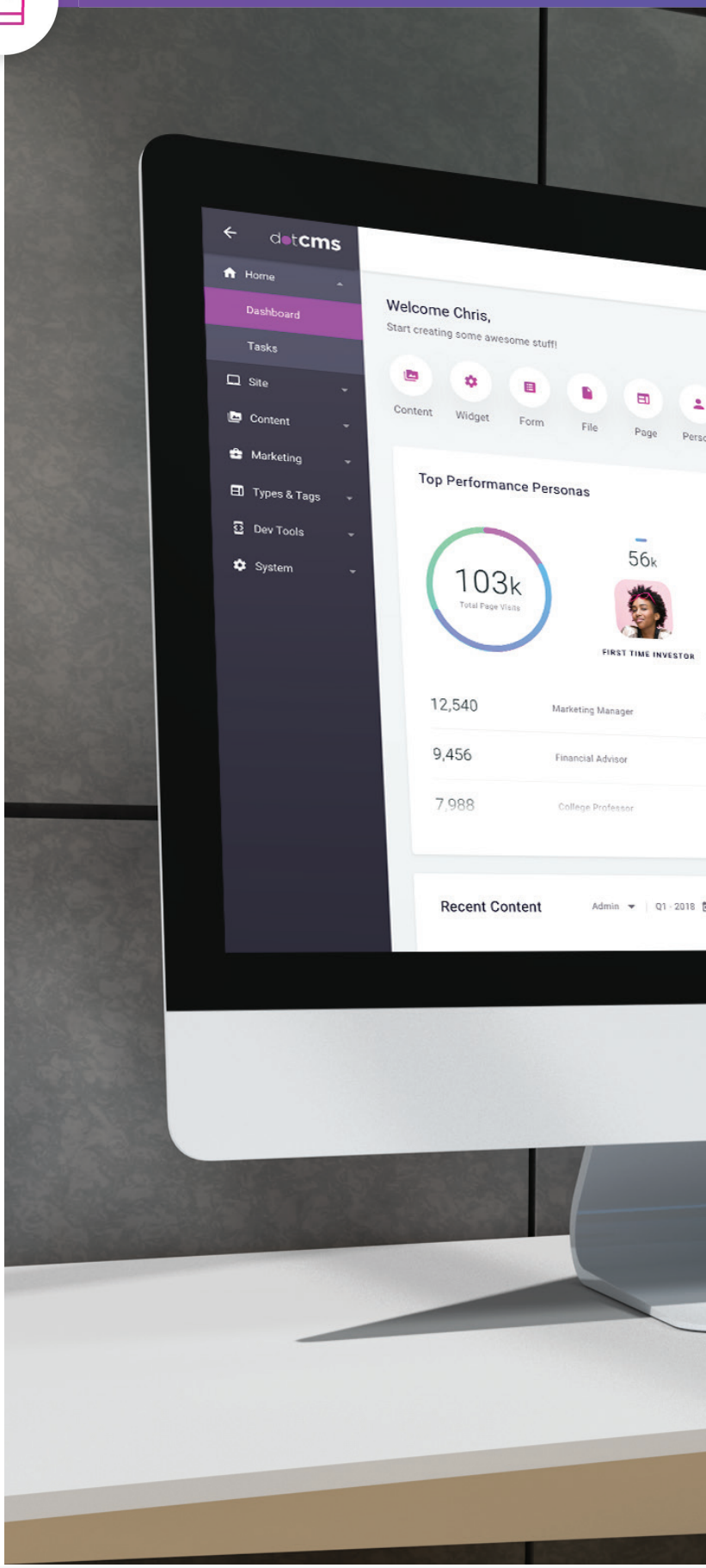
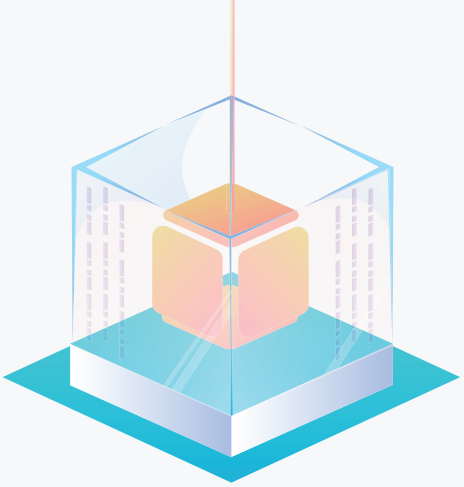
dotCMS: An SEO Specialist's Dream

If you're looking for one platform that encompasses **all the SEO-supporting features listed above, you'll find it in dotCMS.**

Using dotCMS, both sides of SEO, the technical side and and the innovation side, are managed in an optimized way, without the marketer have to do any heavy lifting. As the roles between content author, content editor, and SEO specialist begin to blur, it's crucial that the optimization of content happens before it is published to the website. dotCMS helps to facilitate that process, coming equipped to support these best practices out of the box.





About dotCMS

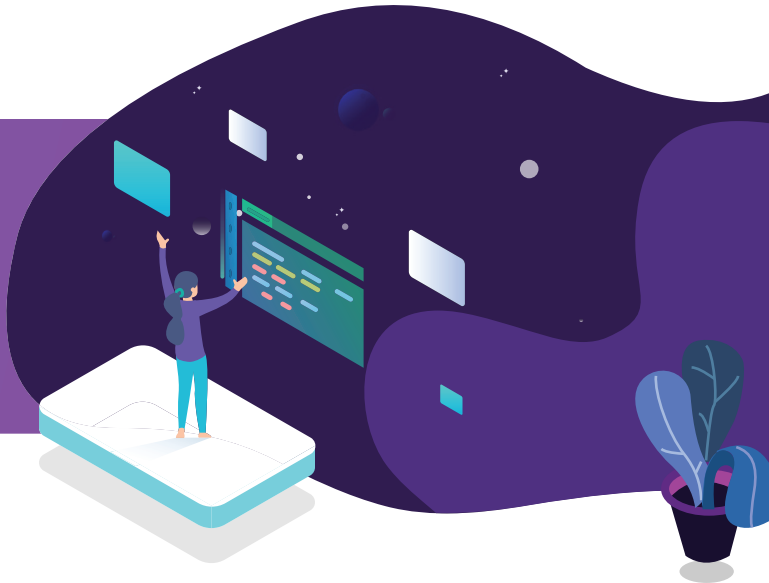
dotCMS is an open-source Java, customer experience orchestration hub for companies that want to drive business outcomes with their websites and other content-driven applications. dotCMS provides the technology to deliver connected and continuous customer experiences that business teams can orchestrate.

Extensible, scalable, and with headless content management capabilities, organizations can rapidly build their Digital Experience Platform and drive innovation while their marketing and business teams drive customer experiences for every touchpoint, in every customer journey, on any device — all from a single system

Founded in 2003, dotCMS is a privately owned U.S. company with offices in Miami (Florida), Boston (Massachusetts), and San Jose (Costa Rica). With a global network of certified implementation partners and an active open-source community, dotCMS has generated more than a half-million downloads and over 10,000 implementations and integration projects in over 70 countries. Notable dotCMS customers include: Telus, Standard & Poors, Hospital Corporation of America, Royal Bank of Canada, DirecTV, Nomura Bank, Thomson Reuters, China Mobile, Aon, DriveTest Ontario, and ICANN.

SCHEDULE A

dotCMS demo at dotcms.com



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7 https://dotcms.com/docs/latest/url-rewrite-rules

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