Drupal vs. Sitecore

Comparing Drupal and Sitecore

For organizations trying to determine which Content Management System (CMS) is best for their team, the choices can seem overwhelming. Trying to understand the difference between systems can sometimes feel like comparing apples to oranges. With Drupal and Sitecore specifically, there are a number of significant differences between the platforms, which makes them each better for certain use cases.

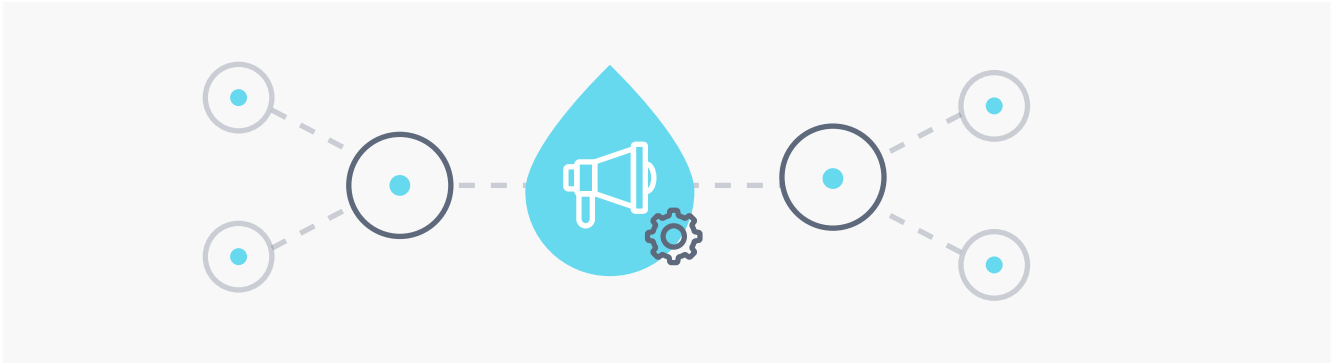
But first, let's define the two systems. What's the difference between Drupal and Sitecore?

A Quick Definition of Each

Drupal is an open-source CMS, and is free to use. It's maintained by a community of volunteers and sponsored contributors, and comes out-of-the-box with numerous modules and integrations. Drupal powers some of the world's largest and most complex websites, and is an excellent choice for organizations that want a solution that offers seamless and complex integrations.

Sitecore, on the other hand, is a closed-source CMS with hefty licensing fees. However, even though Sitecore doesn't come out-of-the-box with modules enabled, it offers some of the strongest marketing automation tools on the market, which is makes it an ideal platform for organizations that are serious about content personalization, journey orchestration, and marketing.

Drupal and Sitecore are both strong platforms with competing features, though they have different areas of strengths, which are compared below.



Marketing Automation

The biggest benefit of Sitecore, and the reason why it has been ranked in the top of Gartner Magic Quadrant for five years running, is marketing automation. A Sitecore site is more than just an omni-channel solution: Sitecore's content personalization and marketing automation tools make it the go-to choice for organizations that are prepared to fine-tune every facet of their customer experience. Some of the features offered by Sitecore include:

- **Continuous testing**, which lets organizations continuously test different components of the system against each other, and optimized based on results
- **Path analysis**, which identifies how people enter the site, which routes they take, which routes generate more profits, and which routes lead to fewer profits
- **Deeply granular segmentation and analytics** that help marketers segment audiences based on age, gender, user profiles, time of day, persona, and more
- **Machine learning in Sitecore 9**, which allows the platform to automatically revise and improve itself

Which is Better?

For organizations that are serious about segmentation and personalization, Sitecore is hands-down the ideal platform, though its strong customization features come with a hefty price tag. Drupal, on the other hand, has no licensing fee, and can be integrated with marketing automation tools to create a strong marketing platform. Ultimately, the choice between the two platforms depends on the depth of fine-tuning that you want be available to your team.

Content management

From a content management perspective, the situation is a bit more complicated. While Sitecore's current backend is perfectly functional, the user experience leaves quite a bit to be desired. Upcoming editions of Sitecore (such as Sitecore 9.1) will have drastically improved authoring experiences and content management tools, such as options for advanced workflows on specific areas or content types on the website - and either using predefined flows, or create their own variation. These tools will let users configure systems for approvals, notifications, and translations on various content items.

Drupal, on the other hand, currently has a much more customizable back-end than Sitecore. Though the default Drupal content administration view isn't particularly appealing, a web development agency can customize the back end for organizations that are concerned about optimizing the content editors' user experience. Custom workflows for content teams can be implemented, too, to ensure that governance standards are met, and that all content is posted and approved according to organizations' existing content practices.

Which is Better?

Currently, Drupal offers the potential of a superior content editing interface, though that may change with the introduction of Sitecore 9.1.

Security

Both Sitecore and Drupal are very secure platforms. Sitecore is built on .NET, which is a Microsoft technology. Whenever a .NET patch is rolled out, all Sitecore sites are updated automatically, with no need for user intervention. And since Sitecore sites are designed to minimally integrate with other systems, there's less risk of an outside security flaw being introduced.

Even though Drupal is a highly integrated system, it is also incredibly secure. Any web development agency worth its salt (like FFW, for example!) will know which secure modules to use, and will have strong knowledge of how to build a securely integrated platform.

Additionally, the Drupal CMS itself is incredibly secure, with a strong team of serious volunteers and sponsored developers who work around the clock to monitor any security vulnerabilities and, when one is found, quickly build patches to ensure that every website running on Drupal remains safe.

Which is Better?

When it comes to security, there are no losers here: both Drupal and Sitecore are excellent choices for organizations that are concerned about security.

Scalability

Both Drupal and Sitecore are highly scalable options-- but Sitecore offers a stronger offering of scalability options, making it the winner here. With Drupal, external systems help sites scale flexibly under heavy loads, but configuring different or complicated systems can be difficult.

With Sitecore, on the other hand, complex scalability is baked into the system. Configuring different parts of your system for different servers in different regions is simple, and teams can individually configure the loads that each technology performs on the system. Sitecore also has excellent cloud functionality, which is one of its major appeals to organizations that need a strong set of controls over their platform.

Which is Better?

When it comes to scalability, both Drupal and Sitecore are excellent solutions, but Sitecore offers more scalability options. For many organizations, this makes it a slightly better choice for large, distributed, or international platforms.

Accessibility

Drupal and Sitecore are both accessible platforms, though Drupal has better features out of the box, such as default support for WAI-ARIA. Drupal 8 has a number of accessibility tools built in, with more modules available to offer improved experiences; Sitecore, on the other hand, requires that designers and frontenders build a HTML prototype, which is then broken down into components, tested, and rebuilt in the Sitecore system. Both Sitecore and Drupal can be built and tested according to WC3 standards, but with Sitecore, it might take a bit more work.

Which is Better?

Though both are adequate solutions, Drupal might be the better choice for organizations looking to get hands-on with their site accessibility.

The bottom line

Either Drupal or Sitecore is an excellent choice for organizations that are interested in a large-scale website. For groups with huge budgets that are committed to maintaining a finely-crafted user experience, Sitecore is likely the better choice; for organizations that need platforms that are integrated with a variety of tools, Drupal would likely be a better fit.

If you want more information, are exploring your options, or feel ready to commit to a specific platform, contact FFW. Our Drupal and Sitecore development teams are here to help your organization succeed, no matter which route you choose.

CMS	**Drupal**	**Sitecore**
Cost of license	Free	Six figures
Marketing Automation	Only through integrations	Comes with powerful marketing automation tools as part of the system
Content Management	Strong workflows and content authoring experience	Medium content authoring and workflows, with changes coming soon
Security	Very secure - volunteer and community efforts	Very secure -walled-garden technology
Scalability	Yes, with outside integrations	Highly flexible built-in tools and cloud support
Accessibility	Comes with strong accessibility tools	Accessibility is built into the development process

About FFW

FFW is a digital agency focused on creating digital experience platforms that ensure our clients' success, always moving forward at the speed of digital innovation.

We're an Acquia preferred partner, and have been recognized for our commitment to Acquia products, expertise, and quality of our production. We're 3-time Acquia Engage sponsors, 3-time Acquia Partner Site of the Year winners, and 3-time Acquia MVP winners, with 120 Acquia-Certified developers on staff.

Since 2000, the world's largest brands have relied on us to build accessible, creative, and user-friendly digital solutions that deliver results. We are more than 375+ people across 10 countries, with a track record of over 1,000 digital solutions delivered.

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