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## "SHOW YOUR WEB SITE WHO'S BOSS!"

Are you a big control freak with a small business web site? I am, and until a few months ago, my site ran me. Changes, corrections, CONTROL – I was not in the driver's seat. But now, with hands firmly on 10 and 2, I've got the wheel, thanks to something called a Content Management System. (Because we're the efficient types, let's call it a CMS from here forward.)

A CMS is a dream for any business owner who loves phrases like, 'tighter control,' 'completely empowering,' and 'easily managed.' It basically shifts power away from your web developers to you. And believe me, your web guys won't take it personally. Chances are, they got tired of your 400 phone calls 375 calls ago. All those pesky web tweaks cost your web folks too much time and you, too much money. Enter, the lovely CMS.

I write first-hand about the joys of this relatively new approach. After several years of a typical e-commerce web site, I recently converted to a CMS. Yes, it was a budget pincher, but a no brainer, too. I was on board at, 'You get to do everything yourself.'

My business (personalized paper) is 'plain jane,' but it may as well be named 'tinker bell.' I live to tinker with my site and have minutia-ed my web developers for years. But, look, if you have a web site you know this: change is constant - prices, products, industry direction. And invariably, a pesky typo, I mean, typo sneaks onto a web page. It's gotta go!

So, a CMS is for any business owner who craves the control she desires (and requires) to manage her web site as often and as much as she'd like. Here are just a few examples of what I can do on my site at any time of the day or night:

- add new designs as I draw them
- rearrange the order of products for the season
- change prices
- edit text on pages
- delete/add new products

And I don't need to know a darn thing about HTML or coding. Sound good to you? Well, more and more web owners like the sound of it, too.

"I'm transitioning more and more clients to CMS's," says Charlie Madison, owner of ProWebscape. "The word's gotten out, and people want the control a CMS allows. Plus, it saves them expensive hourly updating charges from us."

Madison converted my site to a CMS. He used the MODx Content Management Framework, referred to as an 'open source' system. The benefit of the open source format is

that it integrates easily with an already-existing site, which most of us have. It's like being able to add on to your house instead of having to move out and buy a new one.

"Another nice feature of open source," adds Madison, "is that it also allows me to add custom features to the site with a design that matches the company's existing branding and personality."

Here's an example of that on my site: Madison added a clever 'quick search' box to my dozens of design pages. Now, customers don't have to scroll through several hundred designs to find the 'red purse' they want. Thanks, Charlie.

One of the concerns I had for my web developer, Morton Southall, when he approached me with the CMS concept was – will I be able to master this at the speed of business? O Yep.

"It's pretty straight forward," says Southall, owner of Lime Design. "I've found that clients catch on quickly. Plus, the CMS makes it almost impossible for owners to inadvertently mess up or shut down their sites."

That's good news, because we don't have extra time for added complications like an accidental site kill at our own hand. Plus, since the CMS learning curve is steepest at the beginning, a training session is often included in the installation price and is tailored to the level of your ability and desire to manage your site.

So far, so good for this newly-promoted Tweaky Tinkerson. I've had one panic attack (false alarm), no fatal errors, and tons of fun. I'm in LUV with the CMS, and have just one more question for the geniuses who perfected this awesome tool: is it web site or website?