Revize CMS User Interface Philosophy

Introduction

The document discusses the Revize philosophy for effectively meeting primary Content Management objectives without placing limitations on current and future web site functionality.

The primary objectives of any CMS product are the following:
- Empower non-technical personnel to update web site content
- Establish a consistent look and feel across the entire web site
- Control web site changes via a flexible approval process

In this discussion we will be talking about two different types of users:
- Content Editor – The person updating content (typically a non-technical user)
- Web Developer – The person responsible for designing the web site look and feel

Design Principles

Below are the major Revize design principles:
1. Create an editor user experience second to none
2. Leverage existing internet technologies for easy, productive editing
3. Content Editors' tasks are as easy as purchasing a book online
4. Support rapid application development using state-of-the-art development tools
5. Basic functionality usable by Graphic Designers with no database experience
6. Provide unlimited functionality for experienced database web developers

Philosophy

Ease of use for the non-technical Content Editor is the most crucial characteristic of any Content Management System. The level of acceptance and use of a CMS deployment is directly related to its ease of use and the comfort level of Content Editors, especially the least technically skilled. Reducing the resources required for initial learning and ongoing help desk support has tremendous short- and long-term payback for most organizations.

The Revize philosophy is the Content Editor must be presented with a *single interface* that is congruent with the look and feel of the site. This means a custom interface build to resemble the web site with simple, easy to use, fill in the blank, *custom edit forms* similar to the interface of a well designed e-commerce web site.

Web Developers by definition are technical, and they can generally master a well-designed application interface. Furthermore, in most organizations, the number of Web Developers is small relative to the number of potential Content Editors. Nonetheless, the development of templates and edit forms by the Web Developer must be easy, quick, error-free and easily tested.

Some Content Management Systems provide a pre-built, rigid interface for Content Editors that abstracts them from the context of their web site. The interface typically does not allow for modification or expansion to fit growing business needs.

Revize provides for complete customization of edit forms with minimal additional development time by extending Macromedia Dreamweaver, creating a highly effective Integrated Development Environment (IDE) which:
- Includes pre-built and fully tested controls and objects for the most frequently used functions on both templates and edit forms.
- Makes it easy to clone a template into a *custom edit form*

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Revize provides the following additional advantages:

- Relationships among templates, database fields and edit forms are contained on the templates and edit forms themselves, and therefore are not fixed but scalable
- Revize can implement virtually any desirable feature even when a built in control or object does not exist – and most such features require very little custom scripting.
- Revize is designed as an application framework and can be used to build web-based database applications beyond the scope of Content Management.

Revize Dreamweaver Extension

The Revize Dreamweaver extension allows the Web Developer to create content database tables directly from Dreamweaver. After creating the database tables, the Web Developer can visually drag and drop objects (text, images, links, lists) onto templates and edit forms. Since Dreamweaver provides a split view showing html code, hand coders can easily tweak html generated by Revize objects.

The Revize Dreamweaver extension provides even Graphics Designers without database experience with a high-level interface to deploy robust Content Management Solutions.

Templates

Templates are created by the Web Developer and determine the look and feel of web pages. Web Developers define where content updatable by Content Editors is displayed. Templates may contain fixed and/or updatable graphics. The may contain fixed links and/or areas where links can be added by authorized Content Editors.

A separate template is required for each different page layout or design. A single freeform template that gives Content Editors access to the center of the page can often be used for many pages on a site. Revize also lets you create structured templates that might be used for employee directories, job postings, or any other conceivable use.

The Web Developer can use any web design tool to create the original page layout. Converting the page design to a Revize template is most easily accomplished by using Dreamweaver with the Revize extension – but this is not required.

Publishing

Revize **pre-assembles** pages by combining content stored in the content database with templates whenever content is changed by the Content Editor or the template is changed by the Web Developer. This occurs **PRIOR** to page viewing by a site visitor. Pages are NOT re-assembled every time the page is viewed. Pre-assembly has the following benefits:

- Revize is not a required component for page viewing
- The content database is not accessed at view time
- Very little server resources are required for page viewing
- Response time for page viewing is fast
- Revize and the content database do not need to be accessible to visitors (or hackers)

Pre-assembled pages can be sent to any one or more server(s) on the planet. This Revize publishing process occurs before pages are viewed. Revize can publish asp, aspx, cfm, jsp, js or any other type of file. Any non-Revize dynamic processing can still occur when published pages are viewed.

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Site Navigation

Finding content to be edited is the first challenge faced by non-technical Content Editors. Solving this challenge should be easy. Why not simply browse to the page to be edited? If a Content Editor can browse to a page and then edit it, there is nothing new to learn. Upon reaching an editable page, the Content Editor simply logs in, and edit controls appear on the page. By clicking on an edit control, the Content Editor browses to a custom edit form, all within a tightly secure environment.

If the Content Editor is required to find pages through an application interface, there is something new to learn. Multiply this learning process (together with its hang-ups and complications) across all potential Content Editors, and the recipe for a resource-draining IT headache is the result.

Custom Edit Forms

Revize edit forms are most effective for non-technical users when they resemble the template they are associated with and are designed as simple, easy-to-use, fill-in-the-blank forms similar to those used on any well-designed e-commerce site. Confusion can ensue if the Content Editor sees screens that are not consistent with the page being viewed.

Link Management

The second most important characteristic of a Content Management System is the ease with which duly authorized Content Editors can add pages to a site. Revize believes that 80% of content management consists of adding new pages rather than updating existing pages. This means that the process had better be easy and not error-prone. The Revize paradigm for adding pages is to add a new link to an existing page, and in the process automatically creating a new page using a developer-defined template. The Web Developer defines which template or templates are available for new pages. The templates available can be controlled by context. Because the link must be created first, orphan pages cannot be created.

Links can be added in one of two ways: 1) to specific areas of a web page designated by the Web Developer who designed the template or 2) as part of content added via the Rich Text Editor. The permissions assigned to specific Content Editors determine where (if anywhere) links can be added.

Links added to specific areas of the web page are often shared by multiple pages. The common example is links placed on the left side of a page. These might be the same for all pages in the site or a specific section of the web site. Revize makes is easy to design templates in a way that shared links are automatically added to all associated pages whenever a link is added to any one page.

Links added within content via the Rich Text Editor are typically not automatically placed on other pages, but the choice is left up to the Web Developer.

True Commercial Off The Shelf Product - COTS

Revize reduces installation, integration and ongoing support by completely assembling all required components (Publishing Engine, Web Server, Application Server, Database) and testing as a unit.

Revize is written in Java making it platform independent and adheres to open standards.

The Revize Advantage

1. Custom Interface / Application Framework
2. Publishing technology (dynamic pre-assembly)
3. True COTS product (complete assembly / open standards / platform independent)
4. Automated Link Management
5. Dreamweaver-based IDE with drag-and-drop functionality for beginning developers and virtually infinite functional expansibility for advanced developers

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