Killer Content:
Strategies for Web Content and E-Commerce
written by Mai-lan Tomsen

review by Oliver Christ and Dörte Wittig,
University of St. Gallen, Switzerland

Content Management – critical review
of a holistic approach

Starting Position
Within the last years the content market is undergoing fundamental changes. The characteristics of the medium internet lead to a variety of new ways to generate, aggregate, distribute and utilize content. New business models like internet based content syndication and new market players result from these possibilities. One of these new competitors in the market is the content broker iSyndicate. The company bundles content from over 700 providers and distributes personalized and format independent content to a vast number of customers via electronic media. At the same time the standards for content representation on portals are increasing and companies are under pressure to offer comprehensive and high quality content and services. The importance of content within a company’s business strategy is increasing. On account of the complexity of information and the intensifying specialization of companies, enterprise information portals as well as customer portals need more external and personalized content to provide employees, business partners and potential customers with targeted and relevant information. Companies are seeking for efficient business and revenue models.

Content of the publication
“Killer Content” gives an extensive survey of different facets of the content industry and its products and processes. The author describes challenges for different kinds of companies, from brick-and-mortar companies to cutting edge new economy firms.

The first part – “concepts” – gives an easy to understand analysis of different variants of value exchange related to the Internet and a description of ways to gain revenues (e.g. advertising, transactions, subscriptions, pay per use). According to the author special attention has to be paid on customer orientation and diversification of the revenue sources. Part two of the book – “strategy” – focuses on the possibilities to profitably apply the described value exchange in practice. This includes, first of, strategies to satisfy the users by means of positive experiences like memberships, individualization, support, community building, and marketing activities. Secondly the part strategy emphasizes the organization of the presented information, like navigation, personalization, standardization of processes, privacy policies, and digital rights management. Finally under the part strategy aspects like technological structures and infrastructure are
subsumed. The publication concludes with a glossary containing the most important terms related to the internet.

According to the author the target group of the publication consists of IT-Professionals and System Architects. While the book can provide useful information for novices in this field of expertise, experts will scarcely benefit from reading this publication.

**Critical Review**

Mai-lan Tomsen separates conceptual analysis from practical instructions. This proven method facilitates the understanding of coherence between different aspects of content management. The conceptual analysis delivers a theoretical framework, which is used in the second part for structuring and explanation of practical implementation. The author chooses a very broad approach to the topic Content Management. The result of this procedure is a comprehensive overview but also a superficial analysis of the specific topics. Professionals in the Content Management field will likely be unsatisfied with this book. The publication contains insufficient new findings. Unfortunately most of the ideas were already described in earlier publications, e.g. in Tapscott 1997 or Shapiro/Varian 1998. The publication comprises a lot of case studies and examples. Each chapter is rounded out with a summary. One weakness is the lack of substantial instructions for practical implementation. If the target group are IT-Professionals – like indicated by the author – the information provided should focus more on the application of new technologies, specific architectures, and on project design. The complex subject of Content Management is illustrated in an easy understandable and rather informal language. Unfortunately a precise expression of core statements is missing. This book is written for IT Practitioners in the content industry or consulting firms. It is not very valuable for members of the scientific community. A strict theoretical methodology is missing but also not requisite for meeting the target groups needs.

**Recommendation**

"Killer Content" provides an extensive introduction to different aspects of content management. Existing business models and models of value creation, organization, processes and infrastructure for the content management are described. For readers who want to get an outline of the basic developments in the content management field, this book can provide a set of useful information.

**Rating**

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Rating Points: excellent: ++++  poor: +

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