

The truth about Drupal

Why Drupal is great

- Large community of 3rd party developer
- Quality control over contributed code
- Most of the “indispensable” contributed modules are maintained by solid development companies that share their codebase used on big projects
- Mature and complete core API
- Almost 100% extensible, via *hook* system
- Installation profiles that lets you make small distributions with a set of features
- Robust command line interface (drush)
- *Features* module allows to encapsulate a set of preconfigured components and distribute them as a single module
- *Feature server* let you distribute your features and keep them synced and updated
- Robust suite of layout/templating modules that allows complete control over output markup: *Panels*, *Display Suite*
- Taxonomy terms may have a complex structure, allowing to tag nodes with other complex entities (e.g. tag an article with a country, that also hold all country informations)
- Strong caching system

Why Drupal is tough

- The API learning curve is steep
- There are often many modules that provide the same feature, and an extensive experience is needed to properly choose and integrate them
- A 100% bullet-proof system to manage staging and deployment is still lacking (even if *Features* provides a great starting point)
- It's less suited to be installed and configured by a non-expert user than Joomla or Wordpress
- A project can be developed using very different philosophies: it's likely that a developer can find difficult to manage a poorly documented website developed by other people

Modules you can't live without

Views

Allows to query Drupal database to extract objects.

Unless you plan to use a vanilla install (basic blog/news website) you're going to use it.

Use case:

Display all pages created by users that have posted at least 10 times last year.

Panels

Allows to build reusable custom page templates.

If you have complex layouts that involves several rows/columns, that are reused across pages, this is the right module.

Use case:

Display article comments on a sidebar, related contents on the bottom.

Display suite

Allows to have different renderings of the same content type.

If your website presents the same content in different ways across pages, this module will speed up the process of templating

Use case:

Display title and author of articles in the home page, title+author+teaser in the blog page, full articles in the article page, and only article pictures in a gallery page.

Nodequeue

Allows to create queues of content.

If you want to show a list of contents and let the editor rearrange them arbitrarily you're

going to use it.

Use case:

Featured contents in your home page, that you want to keep in a precise order, different than post date, sticky, etc.

Libraries

Allows to integrate third party components.

If you want to integrate third party components, either PHP libraries or JS plugins.

Use case:

Integrate CKEditor as WYSIWIG editor.

Devel

Allows to debug custom written modules during development.

If you're going to develop your own custom module or theme.

It provides useful debugging tools that let you dig into Drupal data structures.

Menu block

Allows to have different views on the same menu.

If you want to render the same menu in different ways.

Use case:

Display the first level of the main menu on the top bar, and the second to third levels on a sidebar.

Internationalization

A collection of modules to extend Drupal core multilingual capabilities.

If you have a multilingual site you're going to use it.

Feeds

Import or aggregate data as nodes, users, taxonomy terms or simple database records.

If you have one of the following requirements you're going to use it:

- One-off imports and periodic aggregation of content
- Import or aggregate RSS/Atom feeds
- Import or aggregate CSV files
- Import or aggregate OPML files
- PubSubHubbub support
- Create nodes, users, taxonomy terms or simple database records from import
- Extensible to import any other kind of content
- Granular mapping of input elements to Drupal content elements
- Exportable configurations
- Batched import for large files

Pathauto

Allows to setup and manage patterns for url aliases.

If you need to optimize URLs of your website making them human readable and search engine friendly.

Rules

Allows to trigger custom actions when a configurable condition is verified.

If you need to automatically send an email to administrators when a user posts a comment you're going to use it.