

Migrating from Ektron to Drupal Why & How



For the present Ektron users, migrating to Episerver is a definite choice. But Ektron customers shop for alternate options due to various business considerations. Out of the many choices, Drupal tops the list. Drupal is the most widely used enterprise open source CMS. Why should current Ektron users migrate to Drupal? Read on.

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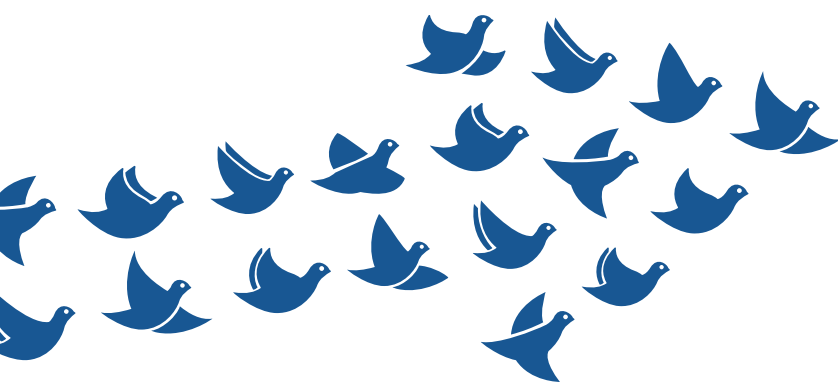
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INTRODUCTION

In January 2015, Accel-KKR which owned Ektron CMS announced the merger of the CMS with EPiServer to create a unified CMS platform. EPiServer, the more sophisticated CMS among the two, coming with a complete editing interface, a better admin interface, and other superior features was marked as the platform which would receive further updates.

Existing Ektron users have the option to continue with the suite, but the lack of updates means it is only a matter of time before the CMS became obsolete, and that time is fast approaching. Enterprises looking to keep up with the technology curve and stay relevant have no option but to migrate from Ektron.



WHY MIGRATE FROM EKTRON TO DRUPAL

The default solution for Ektron users is to migrate to EPiServer. However, many Ektron users are shopping alternate options as well for various reasons. Organizations definitely think of the platform that works well for them when it comes to content migration. Organizations and individuals also look at the prospects offered by the new CMS post migration. Many Ektron users rather prefer to take the opportunity to migrate to other CMS suites, and among such options, migration to Drupal leads the pack.

Why Drupal?

Drupal offers several distinct advantages. Its open source nature, with strong support from a wide community of technical enthusiasts, coupled with the absence of a licensing fee, makes it a very attractive and cost-effective option for enterprises.

Drupal offers the right mix of ease of use and robust functionality. It scores especially high over Ektron in delivering highly powerful admin interfaces, templates, and plug-ins. The easy availability of powerful modules and integrations in the Drupal community accelerates the development process and cuts costs drastically.

Drupal offers a complete package. Drupal themes are SEO optimized, offer cross browser compatibility, and come optimized for mobile devices. Regular updates keep vulnerabilities at bay.

Other attractions of Drupal:

- *Mobile-first nature*
- *Easy to customize*
- *Multi-lingual support*
- *Most widely used enterprise CMS*

Adding a boost to Drupal is Drupal 8 version. *Checkout why you should upgrade to Drupal 8.*



PRE-MIGRATION CONSIDERATIONS

Decide on the Scope

The first question to decide before committing to migrate from Ektron to Drupal is the scope of migration. The scope of the migration can extend from a basic change of technology platform, retaining the core features and functionality of the legacy Ektron system, or a full-scale website redesign. The best option is to opt for a basic migration template, and treat each additional upgrade as a separate project, conducted in sync with the basic migration exercise.

Take Stock of the Resources

After gaining clarity on the scope of the project, take stock of the resources to be migrated. The specific elements to be evaluated are:

- *Source site URL*
- *The list of pages and articles*
- *Content to be migrated*
- *Components and plugin data to be migrated*
- *Template migration or evaluation of new theme*
- *Any custom requirements*

Make sure to back up the Ektron CMS database before working on the migration. Do not touch the source Ektron CMS site until Drupal CMS is live and all bugs are fixed.

Select a Hosting Platform

Another important consideration is the hosting platform for the new CMS (Drupal). Many Ektron users already have a Windows infrastructure in hand. However, many users still prefer to migrate to Drupal-centric hosting platforms such as Acquia or Pantheon. These platforms offer easy drag and drop interface between the development, staging and production environments, for both content and code, allowing even non-technical users to deploy easily. Acquia and Pantheon also offer robust technical support, taking the load of further maintenance off the enterprise's back.

WHAT TO MIGRATE

The actual migration includes porting different elements, such as content, extensions, and templates.

Content Migration

Migration of content from Ektron CMS to Drupal CMS includes porting these aspects: the various pages containing content, images, documents, attachments, along with the taxonomies, tags categories and sections, user profiles and user groups, comments, and other resources.

Extension Migration

Many Ektron CMS sites have installed extensions, which too would ideally have to be migrated to Drupal. Some of the most popular Ektron extensions are content construction kit, events and calendars, photos and images extension, multimedia extensions, communities, classified and link directories, e-commerce extension, multilingual extension, and more.

Template Conversion

There are two options when it comes to templates:

1. Create an identical template in Drupal CMS theme
2. Install and configure a new Drupal CMS Theme

A key challenge in both the approaches is to retain the same navigation. Creating a new navigation can disrupt the system and would result in heavy costs, both in terms of training, and the opportunity cost in lost productivity and business.

Theme

One of the most critical decisions in the migration process is selecting an appropriate Drupal theme.

Drupal offers a plethora of themes. The best theme depends on the nature of the website, and also the taste and requirement of the site owner. The best practice is to opt for a theme that delivers solid and clean design and doesn't get on the way when the user tries to navigate the website. A clean, simple and minimalistic design is in vogue nowadays. There is also the option of developing a custom theme to suit the specific requirement, but it would add to the effort, and become a separate project in itself.

MIGRATION OPTIONS

The nature and ease of the exercise depend on the simplicity or complexity of the legacy Ektron CMS. Migrating a simple website with limited data may require just setting up the Drupal template and infrastructure, followed by a CSV import directly into the new Drupal database. However, most projects are much more complex and require data mapping, coding, and other considerations.

The first step in the migration process is to secure FTP access to the Ektron CMS, and also have the Drupal CMS administrator credentials ready on hand.

Migrating Ektron content and taxonomy into Drupal is very easy. Use any general purpose language such as Perl to pick the required content from the SQL dump of the old Ektron database. Likewise, develop a custom code to import the content into Drupal.

Another option for content migration is to use the XLIFF (XML Localization Interchange File Format) files available through Ektron's language export feature. These files enable access to the existing site content and offer a short-cut to the content migration process.

Custom code vs automated tools

Developing custom code offers unmatched flexibility, and is a good way to overcome some oddities that exist in storing information in Ektron, and which may create glitches in the migration process.

Many site owners take recourse to the gamut of automated tools on offer, to avoid writing code. Many of such solutions deploy robots and other automatic migration tools. However, such solutions are rarely complete or comprehensive. The onus is on the project manager to track the automation tool constantly, and work in double quick time to address the gaps left behind by the automation tool.

SEO

SEO can make or break a site. If the site's SEO breaks during the migration process, the SEO may drop, leading to drastic loss of patronage, defeating the very purpose. To retain the SEO, it is essential to retain the Ektron CMS URLs on the new Drupal CMS. However, at the same time, if the URLs were unfriendly to begin with, migration becomes a good opportunity to set it right, using 301 (Permanent) Redirections to new URLs.

HOW TO SELECT A PARTNER / VENDOR

The task of migrating from Ektron to Drupal is best executed in partnership with a competent vendor who understands the business goals better. Choose an experienced vendor who has a track record of executing similar CMS migration projects, and who owns a talented and resourceful team at its disposal to execute the work.

An experienced vendor will:

- Apply the most relevant tools to conduct a thorough audit, to ascertain the number of server side files, client side files, and image files to be ported, number of duplicate files and content to be eliminated, map out the existing database structure, complete with metadata, hyperlinks, DLLs and Jar files, creating a blueprint for the migration process.
- Offer recommendations on the server architecture, possible replacement for DLLs or Jar files, substitutes for legacy plug-ins, and more, on strength of extensive analysis.
- Work with key internal stakeholders, such as programmers, web masters, authors, editors, and others, to plan and execute the migration process. The key elements of a good migration strategy include identifying which content to migrate, having a clear-cut approach to deliverables, and fixing responsibilities for each team and team members, within timelines. The partner may also assist in the pre-migration cleanup, as required.
- Offer wireframes and design options for the new site, to enhance UX depending on user feedback. The CMS migration exercise, in effect, becomes a change process to enhance the UX of the website.
- Assist in the actual migration process, by writing custom scripts to load content to Drupal CMS, convert designs into CMS themes, develop workflows, taxonomy, and integrate with third-party sites such as analytics suites, HRIS, Salesforce, and others.
- Create site maps, top menus, landing pages, micro sites and other resources to enhance the new, migrated website.
- Ensure the ported CMS is fully secure, by overhauling the security deployments in place, and plugging any loopholes.

- Test the new website with extensive tools, to ensure a proper match with the old content and URL. The range of tests can encompass testing on different browsers, load testing to identify high traffic behavior, testing to identify any sluggishness caused by JavaScript embeds, and other third-party integrations.
- Offer post-migration support to iron out any bugs or glitches, monitor usage to detect anomalies, and assistance in tweaking hosting
- Offer demos and train users in the new CMS, reducing downtime, and minimizing productivity loss.

Evaluate each vendor not just on the extent to which they promise such functions, but also their ability to make good such promise, and more importantly, the quality of execution, as evident from their track record.

Such a wide range of functions require specialist expertise which is beyond the scope of any in-house IT team. A third-party partner/ vendor, whose core focus is to perfect the migration glitches can do 100% justice to migration tasks.

Drupal is one of the most powerful and popular CMS in the market, and the trouble of migrating from Ektron platform to the dynamic and the in-thing Drupal reaps rich rewards for your website and improves the productivity of your workforce.

KEY CHALLENGES

A stumbling block encountered by many users trying to migrate from Ektron is the complicated way Ektron stores data. A poor database design can add to the complexity, making it very difficult to link pieces of content together. Ektron had some very particular ways of handling template-level items such as responsive/ adaptive.

The best approach is to *simply pull the content* from the database as available, and link them together later, at the Drupal end. Rather than relying on the available web services, writing a custom export tool to get your data into the required format offers the most robust solution.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER POST MIGRATION

A migration is a good time to clean up the house and get things in order. Following the migration, review all the content ported to the new CMS, and delete unnecessary content. Edit and categorize the content anew. If necessary, rebuild the menu system keeping in mind clarity and ease of navigation, to obtain a clean and well run system.

Migrating to a new CMS essentially involves change, and all the change management considerations become relevant. Topping the list of considerations is training the end-users on the menu and the taxonomy of the new system.

Proprietary EPiServer and the open-source Drupal represent the two different approaches to managing content, and the two systems even have markedly different approaches to solving the same set of problem. However, a thorough migration exercise, considering all factors and covering all bases makes the transition smooth, with minimal disruptions.

ABOUT SUYATI

Suyati is a fast-growing, digital transformation solutions company that helps you rebuild your customer experience for the digital consumer. We collaborate with businesses to strategize and implement impactful digital initiatives that position our clients ahead of the competition. We are digital-first and we focus on delivering digital transformation solutions that support your various engagement strategies. With our niche and rich expertise in a wide range of technologies and services- CMS, CRM, e-commerce, Cloud, IoT, Data Analytics, and Product Engineering- we help companies leverage their best on web/cloud/mobile platforms.

We enable you to create insights driven customer engagement across all touch points to build a unified marketing approach. Our custom technology solutions have been deployed successfully in companies across the globe, especially in the US, UK, Europe and Australia.



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