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ektron

Migrating from
Ektron to EPiServer
Why & How

Added and improved functionality, better support and strong cloud presence – these are the three most cherished rewards that your business would gain while migrating from Ektron to EPiServer. Read on to know why migration to EPiServer is a necessity and the steps to accomplish a seamless migration.

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WHY MIGRATING TO EPISERVER ADDS VALUE

The beginning of 2015 saw the **purchase of content management platforms** EPiServer and Ektron by Accel-KKR. Following this acquisition, the buyer subsequently decided to create a single platform in the Cloud that is capable of being a leader in digital experience delivery. This has made it imperative for Ektron customers to migrate to EPiServer. In this merger, EPiServer was declared to be the overarching brand. Over the past year, we have witnessed the growth of EPiServer and Ektron under the banner of *Digital Experience Cloud.*

While the existing Ektron customers are being supported, there lies an unanswered question as to whether there would be upgrades or the addition of new cutting-edge features.

The fundamental challenge towards migration is the difference between the two products. While both Ektron and EPiServer are essentially .NET based mid-market content management systems, Ektron is simply that – a CMS product, whereas EPiServer is wider in scope, offering a platform with multi-faceted features and capable of customization to suit customer needs. The very fact that EPiServer is a more comprehensive offering is what probably made Accel-KKR opt to take it forward while leaving Ektron behind. Moreover, the internal architecture and code of these two offerings are also radically different. However, such challenges need not come in the way of Ektron customers looking to migrate to EPiServer, provided the process is done right.

Being armed with insights into the working of EPiServer as well as the best way to shift to EPiServer from Ektron, here are ways in which 2016 will affect their development:

Thorough customization and systematic integration

During 2015, EPiServer majorly focused on providing highly personalized services to the clients. 2016 can expect this trend to be more radicalized and continued.

Also, a matrix of third-party systems will rise as companions to EPiServer, equipping clients to link their web-sites to a vast sum of ERPs, CRMs and other outer structures. This will remove the need for data silos.

Intersection of Commerce and Content

EPiServer serves as point of intersection for commerce and content in the CMS market and in turn brings in this unique feature to the new Digital Experience Cloud. Content is a significant source which attracts the emotional investment on the product. Ektron has been enriched through the commercialization of content allowing it to borrow concept of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), to look into the outcome of content marketing and also to perceive the challenges of such a strategy. Thus, 2016 will witness the emergence of content as building blocks of marketing products.

Powerful Business Intelligence

EPiServer will continue to provide greater BI tools that will empower clients with more information about site usage and statistics. Digital Experience Cloud provides a wholesome UX to the clients and also helps them understand the site users in detail by providing tools for creating profiles, scoring different visitors into categories, for producing outstanding content. This also aids in bringing together systems to generate ideal user experience and supports omni-channel e-commerce such that the user can access the content and website across platforms.

Current Ektron Users: Heading to EPiServer

EPiServer would continue to support the users who have heavily invested in Ektron. Digital experience Cloud will emerge as a platform of well-built content and commerce. This cloud platform will provide regular updates on security and service along with aid for migrating from Ektron to EPiServer through partners. Ektron is also enriched through integrations of EPiServer which are based on cloud (for instance, EPiServer Find).

As the digital ecosystem continues to grow robustly, the regular update of platform reflects EPiServer's dedication towards taking into account the changing needs of its clients, site developers and users. 2016 can expect this pattern of consistent evolution to continue within EPiServer.

Efficient Rebuilding During Migration

Though current Ektron users could continue on the platform for a short while, the transition is inevitable. At such a point, the user's website will need to be rebuilt for accessing the features of EPiServer. In 2016, we can expect greater solutions for a seamless shift from Ektron to EPiServer.

Read further to understand how efficiently you can move from Ektron to EPiServer, without much technical impairments and content grievances.

THE MIGRATION PROCESS

Step 1– Template Design Creation

Rebuilding the website is a tedious exercise, but inevitable when migrating to a new CMS. The new CMS invariably requires different site architecture than what the previous CMS supported. To make the best out of a complicated situation, it makes sense to review your online strategy vis-à-vis what is available in the new CMS. A case in point – this may be a good opportunity to choose an online store into the website since EPiServer integrates this function into its CMS, whereas Ektron does not. Likewise, review the different components in the existing website - blogs, wikis, message boards, videos, infographics and anything else, review the efficacy of such elements, and decide whether to retain, shed or add any element.

Deciding on any such changes required to the website is a policy decision that you have to make, depending on your business strategy. When it comes to implementation, your web developers would do much of the work related to rebuilding the website, but it still makes sense to co-opt professional help.

A case in point as to why this is recommended - in EPiServer, the website structure has a direct bearing on the site's individual page URLs. As such, if page URL contains relevant keywords from the content, it would give SEO a boost. Leveraging this, however, requires planning to co-opt the keywords to the URL upfront, which only professionals who have expertise in implementing EPiServer CMS projects may be able to deliver.

Step 2– Content Audit

All website content becomes stale over time and needs to be spruced up. When undertaking a website redesign to migrate the CMS, much of the existing content would have become obsolete or ill-fitting, and many new sections would require fresh content. Perform a comprehensive content audit based on the new website architecture, and deploy a team of content writing specialists to curate the right content. Data clean-up and converting too-much data are two grossly underestimated challenges when migrating a CMS. Unless these tasks are taken up in the right earnest, migration would become more cumbersome.

An important consideration at this level is personalized content. Make sure to understand how personalization is defined on the existing Ektron based site – especially how the targeted buyer persona is set up. This becomes the basis to set up visitor groups and new personas in EPiServer CMS in the best possible way. As always, this is a good time to review whether the existing personalization set-up is actually effective, and if not, make the necessary changes. EPiServer offers a strong system for creating personalized content, but it works differently from similar customization in Ektron.

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In addition to this, perform an inventory analysis to identify whether specific parts of the current web database, such as web page data, application data, blogs, message board forum posts, and other similar data need to be retained in the new website. It makes sense to discard unwanted data, without wasting time and effort to migrate the same.

Step 3– Systems Audit

All websites, over time, tie themselves with many external systems such as CRM suites, external databases, and more, based on various business requirements. Depending on when such integrations were affected and who performed them, the present web admins may not have a clarity on such integrations. Many-a-times, such latent links have subverted the migration process, causing websites to go down post-migration.

It is imperative to undertake an audit of such integrations, complete with approval chains and workflows, and review the continued necessity of each such integration. This would render clarity to such workflows and make it easy to replicate the same in EPiServer. Post migration, it is important to revisit such integrations and make sure it works. This is especially so for workflows related to e-commerce, without which crucial functions such as order processing, fulfillment, taxing, warehousing or shipping may fail.

Step 4– Migrate Content

Ektron Smart Forms make it easy for website editors to create streamlined and consistent content, and update existing content to give it a fresh look. If websites planning on migration have this feature enabled, then migration becomes smooth, for EPiServer offers a similar capability. Using this Smart Forms feature, it is quite easy to create new content or update existing content to give the website a brand-new look.

However, Smart Forms works best only for basic and simple websites. It is not an effective solution for complex websites, with lots of integrations and linkages in the mix.

There are many options to migrate data from one CMS to another:

★ Develop an API
★ Opt for a web services-based method
★ Get direct access to the database and create an export format
★ Deploy any third-party connectors that may be suited for the purpose

However, the best option is none of the above. Rather it is to wait until EPiServer has launched a migration tool that is on the anvil. This planned tool would ease the migration process considerably.

All the other methods mentioned above might require some technical expertise, and almost invariably require the services of a professional. For instance, it is not always possible to simply do a one-to-one mapping as it would often require migration making several calls to the portal's service layer. Anything other than the simplest of migrations would invariably require intermediate data manipulations and possible other ad-hoc measures. It is crucial to have a detailed plan on the configuration of data in the new portal, based on the structure of the new website. We also need to outline and map out every single call that needs to be made to the portal's service layer.

Post data migration, it is important to restore the workflows, system integrations and visitor groups in the new CMS. EPiServer makes it easy to paste a folder of the assets on the server which will appear in the work area within seconds. It is important to keep a backup of the data and other site assets before starting the task.

Step 5– Train the workforce

EPiServer has a completely different interface than Ektron, and as such users who interact with the website on a daily basis, such as content editors, would be subject to a steep learning curve. Obviously, training would help reduce the time required for them to become familiar with the new way of life and ensure that they regain their productivity at the earliest.

When it comes to content management, push-button migration happens only in theory. Hard and dull work, unplanned changes, demands, and many other issues are more the norm than the exception. Migrating from Ektron to EPiServer is likely to be no different. Having a clear migration plan that allows you to remain in control always, and taking professional expertise to ease the inevitable challenges that come in the way would help in minimizing disruptions that may drain the very vitality of your business.

DIGITAL EXPERIENCE CLOUD MIGRATION
POINTS TO CONSIDER

Infrastructure considerations

EPiServer Digital Experience Cloud (DXC) brings in under its cloud umbrella- a unique blend of features like high availability and performance, easy connectivity with other cloud services and existing systems to manage customer demands effectively. It is a platform that facilitates the seamless adoption of the latest technologies. When DXC service is moved completely to cloud the following points need to be taken into consideration as part of the migration:

★ Auto scalability
★ Increased security
★ Hassle-free maintenance
★ Reduced infrastructure

Development considerations

The **EPiServer Digital Experience Cloud Service (DXC Service)** aids customers in improving the efficiency and scalability of their operations. Developing in the cloud, however, needs some additional considerations when compared to the previous approaches. Following are few of the things to be taken care of:

★ Consolidation of templates
★ Web Forms to MVC
★ Custom apps embedded within the site
★ 3rd party integrations

Considering these factors for development will make your site stable, scalable and responsive.

Content migration considerations

The ideal migration approach depends on the type and quantity of content being migrated. For instances, 3rd party tools can be typically used when there exists large volumes of unstructured content. You can coordinate with your implementation partner to decide which approach suits the best for your scenario. The content migration considerations should focus on these considerations prior to migration.

★ Determine what content needs to be migrated
★ Chalk out a proper content migration process
★ Data Migration testing: Implement **sound validation and QA strategy**

MIGRATION- THE PATH AHEAD

The **official statement of merger** states the objective of the exercise is to "create a new global digital experience leader of scale, with potent technology capabilities and a broad partner ecosystem." In simpler terms, the merged CMS is poised to get significant value-addition, as a result of which clients of each company would get to access improved technology and new capabilities.

Added and improved functionality, better support and strong cloud presence are the three key factors that will push Ektron users to migrate to EPiServer. (Tweet this)

The bottom-line of the merger story is that businesses that have made a significant investment in either Ektron or EPiServer would most likely gain in terms of access to improved technology and new capabilities. The merged offering promises to provide marketers and other teams relying on the CMS the power, insight and agility to seize a business moment, and the confidence to realize aspirations. There would be some bumps on the way as the transition takes place, but businesses would be well advised to stick on and enjoy the ride, which would be worth the while.

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.

www.suyati.com   **services@suyati.com**

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