



Ability Commerce Whitepaper

WHAT IS THE REAL COST OF AN OPEN SOURCE ECOMMERCE SOLUTION?

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CAN YOU AFFORD A “FREE” OPEN SOURCE ECOMMERCE SOLUTION?

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Executive Summary

The popular misconception about open source ecommerce solutions is that they will save time and money. However, the real cost of doing business must be considered when choosing a solution to manage your online presence.

Often, the right questions are not addressed prior to implementation, or there are miscommunications between marketing and IT about the true capabilities of running an open source platform. Additionally, common issues regarding installation, integration, load time, SEO, internal search, and PCI Compliancy are common with open source solutions, as are lengthy wait times for support issues.

Background: What is Open Source?

Open Source isn't in conflict with commercially installed software or SaaS. No matter what the licensing agreement is, the same parameters must be considered:

1. They must all be implemented
2. They must all be configured for your unique requirements
3. They must all be adopted by an end-user base
4. They must all be managed and supported
5. They must all be patched and upgraded
6. They must all be tweaked to meet the ongoing needs of business

What Questions Do You Need to Ask?

A bad implementation will result in a buggy, bloated site—and bad starting code and functionality will only get worse, not better, no matter how well you manage it. Failing to manage and update a system will result in stagnant content and the site's degradation over time. No matter what solution is chosen, your staff will have responsibility for a number of tasks on an ongoing basis. The questions are: how many tasks and to what degree will they consume your internal resources?

These are some of the questions to ask when considering an open source solution:

1. What will be required to get the software working?
2. What will be required to keep it working?
3. Does the solution contain the features and functions to meet your requirements?
4. If the solution does not contain certain features, how will those needs be met? (Your current order management system and other back-end systems? Third-party solutions? Customized work?)
5. Who will perform the functions?
6. What are the associated costs?

IT Requirements

Ideally, you have an IT department that has dedicated resources for your eCommerce solution, always ready to respond to any requests for basic application support and upgrades; network hardware and purchases, upgrade and management; modifications to templates, interfaces, workflows, CSS, price changes, image updates, etc.; security management; troubleshooting; end user support and training; third party vendor selection for things like analytics and lead management. And don't forget about a systems integrator writing a new scope of work for every system change.

Don't have the ideal? Don't feel badly – most of us don't.

And often, the following scenario takes place:

You ask to your IT department: "Can you support an open source eCommerce solution?"

What IT hears from your question is this: "Can we make sure the hardware works, the software works and if there are bugs that I can report it to the open source community and will your response expectations meet the other job responsibilities I have on plate".

Their answer is probably, "Yes". And you think, "Wow open source is free, I have support from IT. What's to lose?"

But what you really need to ask is:

"Can you make sure the deployment works, will you help me with tweaks and bug fixes, will you help with new template development, and will you stay apprised of new versions and security issues?"

Common Issues with Open Source Ecommerce Solutions

Installation:

Open Source applications can be extremely technical and “buggy” to install. If you’re reaching out to the community, can you be sure that their environment is like your environment? How long can you afford to wait for an answer?

Source: <http://www.magentocommerce.com/boards/viewforum/9/>



Topics in the Installation Problems			
Topic Title	Replies	Views	Latest Post Info
 I can't continue the installation Author: publip	0	13	Posted: 6 hours, 26 minutes ago Author: publip

“Hi - I’m trying to install Magento but when I press continue on the “Configuration” page it only reloads and nothing happens no errors nothing. I have followed the xampp installation guide on magentos homepage. And where i select Localization I cant switch from English(United States) What could be the cause? Could it be php_pdo_mysql.dll i hav been looking for a other version but no luck? I have XAMMP v.1.6.6a”

Note: 0 Replies in almost 6½ hours

Source: <http://www.zen-cart.com/forum/showthread.php?p=714910#post714910>



zen cart

13th April 2009, 07:28 PM

ralphie011111
New Zenner
Join Date: Apr 2009
Posts: 5

Installed Zencart But It Does Not Look right

I installed zen cart and recieved no errors but when I browse to the page it does not look correct. Can you please help finding out why it is not running right

<http://www.makeupfordiscountonline.com>

even the admin page looks wrong.

thank you

version 1.3.8

- [Home](#)
- [Log In](#)

Source: <http://forums.oscommerce.com/lofiversion/index.php?t333788.html>



Full Version: [So Frustrating](#)

[Help](#) - [Search](#) - [Members](#) - [Calendar](#)

[osCommerce Community Support Forums](#) > [osCommerce Online Merchant v2.x](#) > [Installation and Configuration](#)

celticdragon Apr 13 2009, 05:03 AM

Hi All,

Its been giving me a headache trying to find where i can delete the image boxes that would have an image in them above my catagory headings and sub catagories. I just want the text link, not the box with red x in it..... my site is clothznstuff.au.com/catalog (havent change to without catalog yet) so you can see the boxes i am referring to when you go to catagories. I have deleted wrong files in the past and am so close now i dont want to risk stuffing site up and needing to redo for a 3rd time

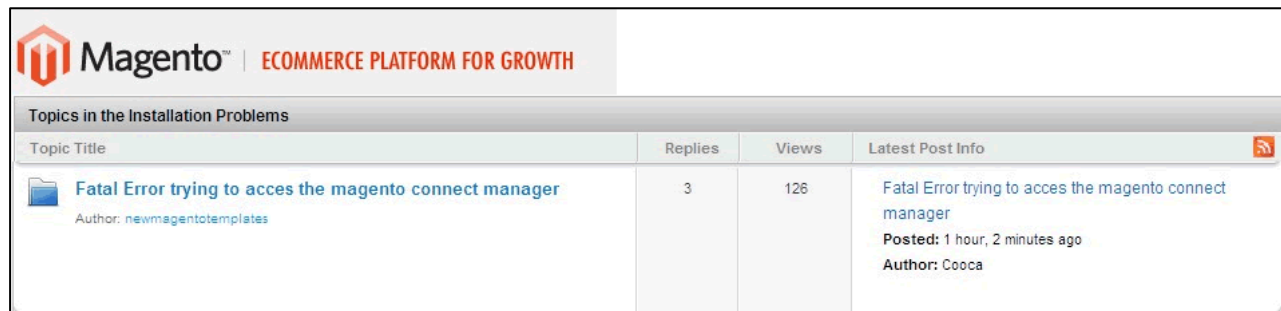
Thank in advance.

Note: 0 replies for each example


Integration:

How will Order Management integrate? It may not – ever. Worse, it may bring your existing web store to a halt.

Source: <http://www.magentoocommerce.com/boards/viewthread/34368/#t125901>



The screenshot shows a forum post on the Magento website. The header includes the Magento logo and the tagline 'Ecommerce Platform for Growth'. Below the header is a table of forum topics. The table has columns for 'Topic Title', 'Replies', 'Views', and 'Latest Post Info'. The first row shows a topic titled 'Fatal Error trying to access the magento connect manager' with 3 replies and 126 views. The latest post info indicates it was posted 1 hour and 2 minutes ago by the author 'Cooca'.

Topic Title	Replies	Views	Latest Post Info
 Fatal Error trying to access the magento connect manager Author: newmagentotemplates	3	126	Fatal Error trying to access the magento connect manager Posted: 1 hour, 2 minutes ago Author: Cooca

```
"Fatal error: Uncaught exception 'Mage_Core_Model_Store_Exception' in
/home/uniquema/public_html/app/code/core/Mage/Core/Model/App.php:1194 Stack trace: #0
/home/uniquema/public_html/app/code/core/Mage/Core/Model/App.php(595): Mage_Core_Model_App-
>throwStoreException() #1 /home/uniquema/public_html/app/code/core/Mage/Core/Model/Cookie.php(69):
Mage_Core_Model_App->getStore() #2
/home/uniquema/public_html/app/code/core/Mage/Core/Model/Cookie.php(129): Mage_Core_Model_Cookie-
>getStore() #3 /home/uniquema/public_html/app/code/core/Mage/Core/Model/Session/Abstract/Varien.php(72):
Mage_Core_Model_Cookie->getLifetime() #4
/home/uniquema/public_html/app/code/core/Mage/Core/Model/Session/Abstract/Varien.php(147):
Mage_Core_Model_Session_Abstract_Varien->start(NULL) #5
/home/uniquema/public_html/app/code/core/Mage/Core/Model/Session/Abstract.php(53):
Mage_Core_Model_Session_Abstract_Varien->init('admin', NULL) #6
/home/uniquema/public_html/app/code/core/Mage/Admin/Model/Session.php(51):
Mage_Core_Model_Session_Abstract->init('admin in
/home/uniquema/public_html/app/code/core/Mage/Core/Model/App.php on line 1194
```

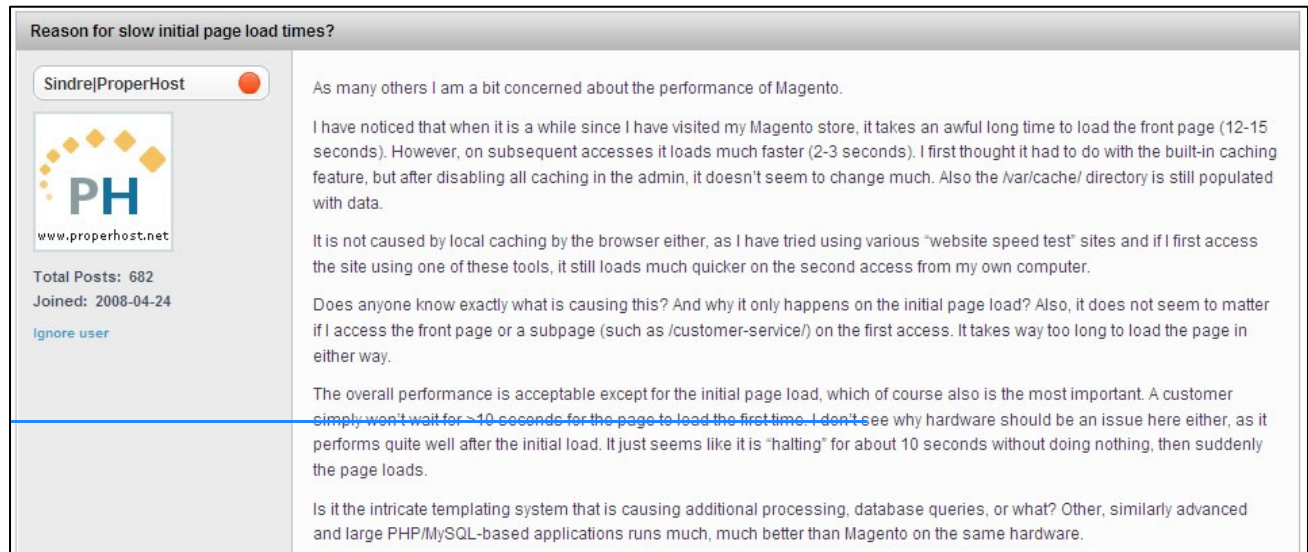
i have no clue what to do... everything else looks fine...
i get this error when going to system/magento connect/magento connect manager
shared hosting...
MySQL version 5.0.67-community-log
PHP Version 5.2.8
this is hosted at site5"

Note: posted 1 month ago

Load Time:

Magento is slow to load, at about 7-9 seconds. The Magento forum is filled with questions regarding slow load times. The default UI provided by Magento is quite heavy in the sense that it loads around 200 KB of JavaScript, a horde of CSS files requested individually all turn into a pretty slow page to render.

Source: <http://www.magentocommerce.com/boards/viewthread/8020/>



Reason for slow initial page load times?

SindrejProperHost

As many others I am a bit concerned about the performance of Magento.

I have noticed that when it is a while since I have visited my Magento store, it takes an awful long time to load the front page (12-15 seconds). However, on subsequent accesses it loads much faster (2-3 seconds). I first thought it had to do with the built-in caching feature, but after disabling all caching in the admin, it doesn't seem to change much. Also the `Var/cache/` directory is still populated with data.

It is not caused by local caching by the browser either, as I have tried using various "website speed test" sites and if I first access the site using one of these tools, it still loads much quicker on the second access from my own computer.

Does anyone know exactly what is causing this? And why it only happens on the initial page load? Also, it does not seem to matter if I access the front page or a subpage (such as `/customer-service/`) on the first access. It takes way too long to load the page in either way.

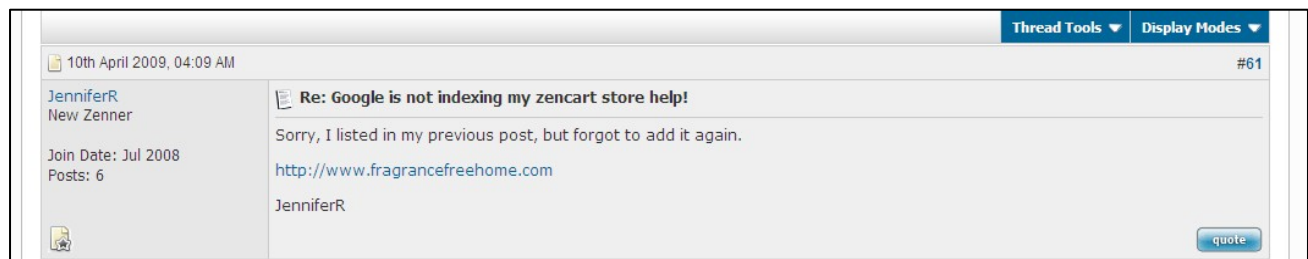
The overall performance is acceptable except for the initial page load, which of course also is the most important. A customer simply won't wait for >10 seconds for the page to load the first time. I don't see why hardware should be an issue here either, as it performs quite well after the initial load. It just seems like it is "halting" for about 10 seconds without doing nothing, then suddenly the page loads.

Is it the intricate templating system that is causing additional processing, database queries, or what? Other, similarly advanced and large PHP/MySQL-based applications runs much, much better than Magento on the same hardware.

SEO:

Finding help for SEO concerns is complicated. You need to go through the forum threads which can be categorized differently because of how the requester has chosen to post their questions. The "12 Steps of SEO for Magento" include header settings, CMS pages, category and product optimization, technical optimization, code clean up, duplicate content right through to sitemaps. This is not documented in one consistent place on the Magento forums.

Source: <http://www.zen-cart.com/forum/showthread.php?t=104977&page=4>



10th April 2009, 04:09 AM #61

JenniferR
New Zenner

Join Date: Jul 2008
Posts: 6

Re: Google is not indexing my zencart store help!

Sorry, I listed in my previous post, but forgot to add it again.

<http://www.fragrancefreehome.com>

JenniferR

quote

Internal Search:

Internal search modules often lack robust features and need customization to be reliable and give merchandised results.

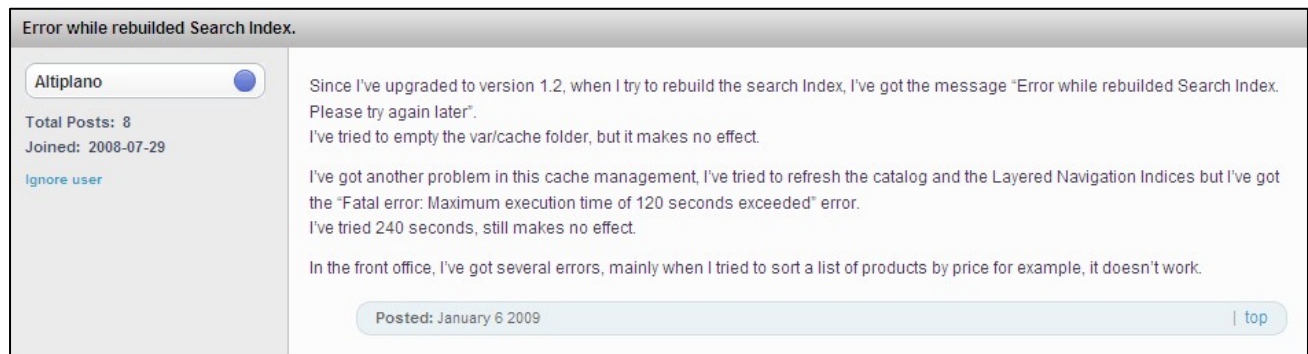
Searching common spellings in Dottie Lottie's Magento store can yield vastly different results: see example of "rain coat" results vs. "raincoat" results.



Source: <http://www.magentocommerce.com/boards/viewthread/3139/>



Source: <http://www.magentocommerce.com/boards/viewthread/27662/>



"I've got another problem in this cache management, I've tried to refresh the catalog and the Layered Navigation Indices but I've got the "Fatal error: Maximum execution time of 120 seconds exceeded" error. I've tried 240 seconds, still makes no effect. In the front office, I've got several errors, mainly when I tried to sort a list of products by price for example, it doesn't work."

Note: The first post was January 6, 2009. There appeared to be no resolution.

ZenCart actually does do a good job with tweaking of internal search and is more stable than Magento. But the administrative interface may be confusing to a non-technical person.

OScommerce was not written for searching. The advanced search option appears in template after template IN THE FOOTER. The application was made for browsing, which is a major hindrance if you have more than 10 products.

PCI compliancy/Security:

This is a major issue, as there is no PCI compliancy policy in ANY open source application. It is up to IT and/or your vendor and webhost. The data is NOT protected by the application. The infrastructure, policy and processes play an important part; but the way the application handles payment data is also very important.

You need to consider how credit card data is stored and encrypted, how the keys for encrypting data are generated, and how easy it is to generate them. It's important to be concerned not only with the payment gateway, but also PCI compliancy. If you have a back-end order management solution which currently stores and encrypts payment data, a successful integration with that management solution is critical to maintaining PCI compliancy.

Conclusion

As you explore your ecommerce solutions, remember: open source ISN'T free. The up-front price may be attractive, but you may be looking at more management overhead. With open source solutions there isn't a centralized (and financially incented) group supporting it – just a passionate community. There is no guaranteed support, no methodical and tested upgrade process and no infrastructure management to support your online presence. Be sure to estimate the lost-revenue cost of down time. If it is critical to your business that your site is “up” and open for business every day, processing orders correctly to ensure repeat visitors and repeat business, open source may prove more costly over the course of a single business year's worth of lost revenue than a commercial solution.

About Ability Commerce

Ability Commerce designs ecommerce software and solutions to meet the specific needs of multi-channel merchants. Together with their parent company, Marketing Concepts, they employ more than 120 staff members with offices in Delray Beach, Florida and Spicer, Minnesota.

For more information about our best-practice marketing solutions please call 561-330-3151, or visit us on the web at www.AbilityCommerce.com.