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How to Go About Developing a Drupal Service by [Zoltan Mesko](#)

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Drupal was originally developed by Dries Buytaert in the year 2000. From its humble

beginnings as a university web-based discussion board, Drupal has grown to become a fullgrown, feature-rich content management system which has been adopted by several highprofile organizations. Drupal is highly regarded by developers because of its extensible

architecture and robust source code. Many developers also admire the scalability of Drupal and its ability to handle high traffic loads with features such as page caching and component/feature throttling. Because of its extensibility, developers often view Drupal as a development platform that happens to have CMS functionality. This popularity among developers has given Drupal a reputation of being a CMS by developers for developers. Of the creators' own admission, Drupal has a reputation of being a developer-centric system that is difficult to use; in the past many developers in the Drupal community have been less than apologetic for Drupal's apparent disregard for usability.

One of the first challenges new Drupal users face is learning the language of Drupal. Terms like node, taxonomy, module and path can be sometimes confusing for first-time administrators. Compounding these terms to create "node module" or "module path" or "path module" with distinctly different meanings only adds to the confusion some may experience. Nearly every Web Networks client has at one point or another asked, "what exactly is a node?" The answer is: a single unit of posted content, excluding "comments". The term "node" does not appear on either the content page in Drupal or in the "administer >> content" interface. Yet, "node" appears repeatedly in help files and extensively through the Drupal handbooks. It is conceivable that a user may encounter the term several times without ever making the connection to "content". One general usability guideline for all software is to avoid jargon. Drupal unfortunately has a great deal of it.

Web Networks' experience has been that users do learn the language of Drupal relatively quickly. It has also been our experience that the initial lack of understanding of Drupal terminology does not prevent users from easily accomplishing basic tasks such as publishing content. Still, unfamiliar terms can be unsettling and do not help provide a positive user

experience.

Unlike several other content management systems, the "look" of Drupal's administration interface is not standardized either. The look of the administration interface is entirely dependent on the theme installed on the site. To be clear, the administration menu items are standardized, but the presentation of the menu is not.

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