PoV

Beyond End of Life:
Transforming Your
Drupal Platform through
Modernization

Introduction

The digital landscape is evolving continually as technology and business processes develop swiftly to meet the changing needs of businesses and users. In terms of content management systems (CMS), Drupal has consistently provided a viable option for companies to build and manage dynamic websites. However, all software solutions have a lifecycle, and Drupal 7's end of life (EOL) is January 5, 2025. After it reaches its end of life, challenges will be inevitable. Hence, updating Drupal 7 is inescapable. In this point of view, we will discuss the importance, challenges, benefits, and tactics of upgrading a Drupal 7 platform after its support ends. The upgrade will create new opportunities and guarantee ongoing applicability in the digital era.

The Drupal 7 legacy - Strength and change

Due to its versatility, extensibility, and robust community support, Drupal 7 quickly gained popularity after its introduction in 2011. It became a desired option for businesses seeking flexibility and scalability because of its ecosystem's growth and prosperity. However, the web ecosystem saw a lot of changes throughout time. The significance of mobile device responsiveness, performance enhancements, accessibility requirements, and security best practices grew considerably. Drupal 7 needed more advancement, which came in the later versions, making Drupal 7 dated and now considered obsolete.

The age of mortality -
Understanding the end of life for Drupal 7

Both an end and a fresh beginning were heralded by Drupal 7's end of support. The Drupal community's decision to discontinue official security updates, feature releases, and support for Drupal 7 had far-reaching effects. Websites running Drupal 7 will be more vulnerable as technical debt and security issues increase. Instead of debating whether to transfer, companies and organizations can switch from the obsolete Drupal 7 edition to a more suitable option and requirement-based structure.

Implications of EOL

With the end of support for Drupal 7, the community will cease offering security patches, bug fixes, and new features. As a result, websites will be more susceptible to security flaws, compatibility problems, and out-of-date technologies.

Technical Debt

Due to a lack of maintenance, Drupal 7 websites will accrue technical debt, leading to performance issues, poorer user experiences, and more difficult maintenance issues.

Adapting to Meet Today's Demands

Since Drupal 7's launch, the digital environment has changed. Successful websites need to be quick, responsive, and accessible on mobile. Using an old CMS carries the risk of slipping behind current industry norms.

Moving ahead -
Options for modernization

Maintaining a current and updated website is a journey. Modernizing a Drupal 7 website involves considering diverse options. Here are some to explore.

Migrate to the latest Drupal version

Migrating to a more recent version of Drupal, such as Drupal 9 or Drupal 10, offers a seamless path forward. These versions bring improved features, enhanced security, and better performance.

Migrate to another CMS

While Drupal is a robust CMS, you might also consider migrating to a different CMS platform that aligns better with your current needs and future goals. Popular alternatives include WordPress, Joomla, and TYPO3. Evaluate each platform's features, ease of use, and community support before deciding.

Headless CMS approach

Transitioning to a headless CMS architecture lets you separate your content management system from your presentation layer. This approach provides greater flexibility in delivering content to various devices and channels, such as websites, mobile apps, and IoT devices. You can use Drupal as a headless CMS or explore other headless CMS options.

Decoupled Drupal

Like a headless approach, decoupled Drupal allows you to use Drupal as a content repository while using different front-end technologies to render the user interface. This gives you the freedom to choose front-end frameworks like React, Angular, or Vue.js to build dynamic and interactive interfaces.

Custom development

Depending on your specific requirements, you might opt for custom development to create a bespoke CMS that meets your unique needs. This approach offers complete control over the features and functionalities of your website but requires significant time, resources, and technical expertise.

Benefits of modernizing to an advanced CMS platform:

Upgrading websites can improve security, performance, user experience, and functionality. With professional guidance, choosing the best option based on your needs for successful modernization is easy.

Enhanced security

Mobile responsiveness

Advanced content management

Performance optimization

Upgraded editing experience

Rich ecosystem

Fresh user experience

SEO and accessibility

API-first approach

Diverse functionality

Simplified updates

Wide range of templates

Extensive integrations

User-friendly editing

Scalability

Managed Hosting

Support and Training

Enhanced security

The new version of Drupal comes with improved security features and robustness. Regular security updates ensure the website remains protected against emerging threats, reducing the risk of data breaches and vulnerabilities.

Performance optimization

The advanced CMS is designed for better performance. Improved caching mechanisms, optimized loading times, and enhanced page rendering contribute to a faster and smoother user experience.

Advanced content management

The CMS offers a more intuitive content management experience. Including the Drupal Paragraphs module enables flexible content structuring, making it easier to create diverse layouts and presentations.

Mobile responsiveness

It prioritizes mobile-first design principles, ensuring the website looks and functions seamlessly across various devices, from smartphones to tablets.

Upgraded editing experience

The built-in CKEditor in Drupal 8 and above provides a modernized content editing experience. The improved administration interface simplifies tasks for content creators and administrators.

SEO and accessibility

It offers improved SEO features and more rigorous accessibility standards. This enhances the website's search engine visibility and makes it more inclusive for all users.

Rich ecosystem

The Drupal community continuously develops modules and themes for newer versions, expanding options for adding new functionalities and designs to the website.

API-first approach

The platform emphasizes an API-first architecture, making integrating with third-party services, mobile apps, and other digital platforms easier.

Fresh user experience

Advanced CMS platforms often come with modern interfaces and intuitive workflows, enhancing the user experience for content editors and visitors.

Diverse functionality

Some advanced CMS platforms offer specialized functionalities tailored to specific industries or use cases, giving you access to tools that may not be available in Drupal.

Extensive integrations

Many advanced CMS platforms offer seamless integrations with popular third-party services, tools, and plugins, allowing you to expand your website's capabilities easily.

Simplified updates

Advanced CMS platforms typically provide automatic updates and security patches, reducing the manual effort required to keep the website up to date.

User-friendly editing

Advanced CMS platforms often prioritize user-friendly content editing interfaces, making it easier for non-technical users to manage and update content.

Wide range of templates

Many advanced CMS platforms offer a wide selection of templates and themes, helping create visually appealing websites without extensive design work.

Scalability

Depending on the platform, you might find better scalability options for handling increased traffic, content growth, and additional functionalities.

Managed Hosting

Some advanced CMS platforms offer managed hosting services for server maintenance, security, and performance optimization.

Support and Training

Many advanced CMS platforms provide robust support resources, including documentation, tutorials, and customer support.

Practical implementation

While moving from legacy CMS to Drupal CMS, organizations look forward to staying on trend, minimizing risks, and optimizing costs. An agile-based implementation approach with a minimal viable product (MVP) strategy makes for a seamless transition. Cost-effective maintenance support after the "go-live" helps better understanding and ensures smooth functioning. This makes the website more efficient, reliable, flexible, and highly scalable. Such a website offers easy editing and publishing of content, and redesign with reduced costs.

Another approach is implementing a cloud strategy to migrate content from legacy systems and building a CMS from scratch. Consolidating different content management systems offers a unified experience using Drupal 8 on Acquia Cloud and a fresh UX design. It improves the experience for end users and content admins managing UX, Search, SEO, etc.

Embracing transformation -
The path forward

A considerable change was brought about by Drupal 7's termination of support, but it also heralded the beginning of something new. A modern Drupal platform upgrade involves more than just complying with regulations. It presents an opportunity for development and change. Upgrading to a current CMS platform is a proactive step in maintaining an influential, safe, and pertinent online presence. With a Strategic approach, the transition from Drupal 7's end of support to a transformational update has the potential to reframe the website's goals, improve user interactions, and spur corporate growth in the digital world.

Contact Us to know how LTIMindtree can help you!

About the author

Afrin Shaikh, Advisory Lead-Interactive is a specialist and part of the Interactive Advisory Group at LTIMindtree. She is passionate and dedicated to orchestrating seamless experience delivery for many personas, including customers, partners, the enterprise, and employees. With a relentless commitment to creating a total experience that leaves a lasting impact, she thrives on bridging gaps and innovating in interactive advisory. She helps organizations transform digital strategies into a more engaging and holistic experience.

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