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Technologies Group

Implementing a CMS:
Your roadmap to success

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About this guide

The value of competency management systems is proven.

No longer is a CMS thought of as a nice-to-have, a tool for compliance, or something confined to companies operating only tankers.
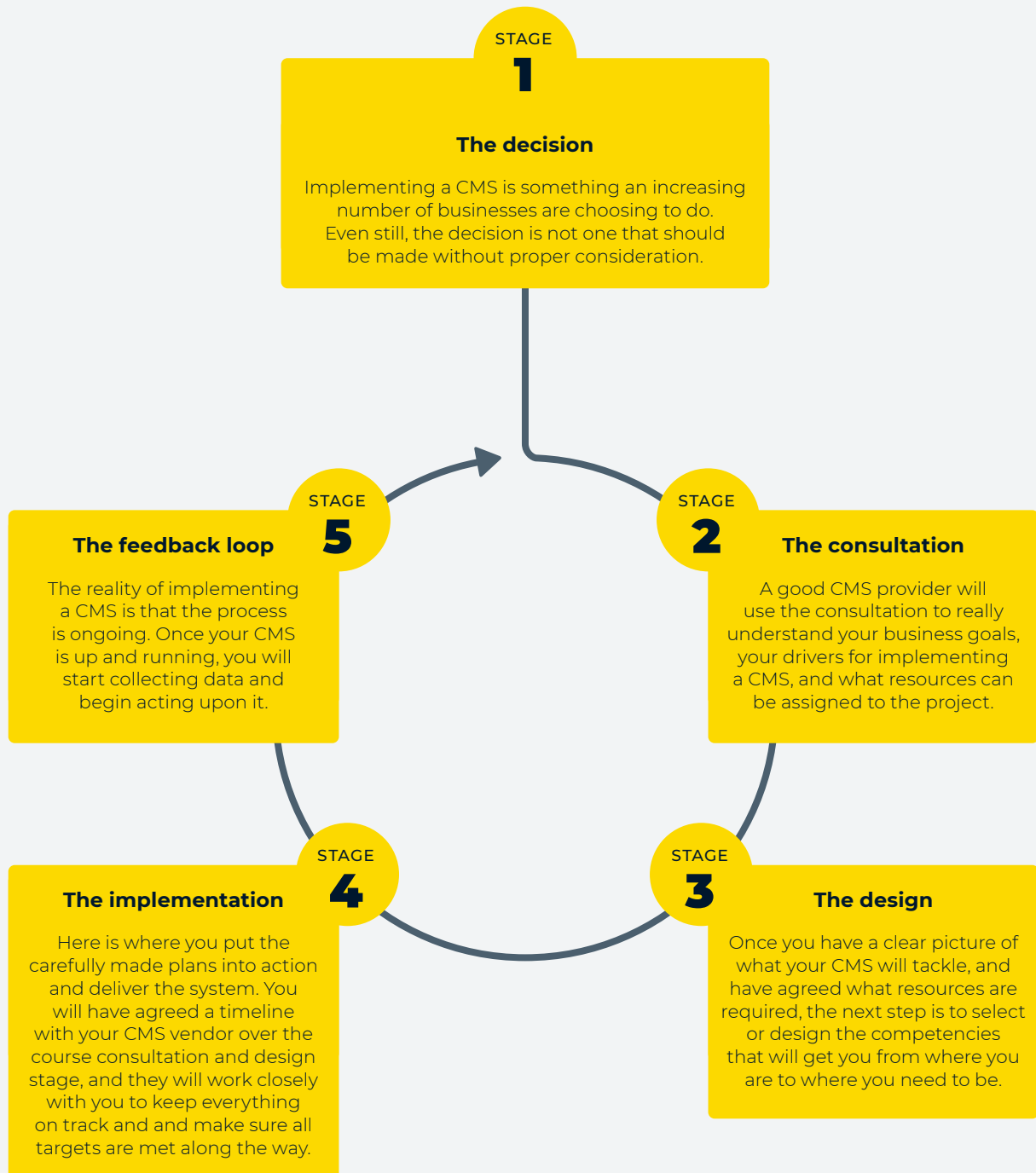
Training managers, superintendents and HR teams operating all types of commercial vessels are singing the praises and reaping the benefits of competency management systems.

Whether you are implementing a CMS for the first time, looking to transition to a new system that is better suited to your needs, or simply want to know what bringing a CMS into your business will entail, then this guide is for you.

We will take you through the key considerations and major steps involved in implementing a CMS and address the common misconceptions. We will hand you the keys to a successful CMS implementation, based on our experience, alongside the testimonies and tips from some of our most successful clients.

Implementing a CMS may seem to be a daunting task. In actuality, if you work with the right CMS provider, there are only five stages to a successful and effective CMS implementation.

STAGE 1

The decision

Implementing a CMS is something an increasing number of businesses are choosing to do. Even still, the decision is not one that should be made without proper consideration.

STAGE 5

The feedback loop

The reality of implementing a CMS is that the process is ongoing. Once your CMS is up and running, you will start collecting data and begin acting upon it.

STAGE 2

The consultation

A good CMS provider will use the consultation to really understand your business goals, your drivers for implementing a CMS, and what resources can be assigned to the project.

STAGE 4

The implementation

Here is where you put the carefully made plans into action and deliver the system. You will have agreed a timeline with your CMS vendor over the course consultation and design stage, and they will work closely with you to keep everything on track and and make sure all targets are met along the way.

STAGE 3

The design

Once you have a clear picture of what your CMS will tackle, and have agreed what resources are required, the next step is to select or design the competencies that will get you from where you are to where you need to be.

"Introducing a CMS into a business is a long-term investment. After the system is designed and implemented, it's vital to allocate resources for ongoing evaluation, support, and development, ensuring it consistently meets evolving business and crew requirements."

Ingrid Grønsberg, Courses and CMS Manager, Ocean Technologies Group

1

The decision

Implementing a CMS is something an increasing number of businesses are choosing to do. Even still, the decision is not one that should be made without proper consideration.

Whether you are planning on implementing industry standards, designing your own competencies, or using an Ocean Technologies Group standard, bringing a CMS into your business requires buy-in from the stakeholders and a commitment of time and resources.

Two key things to be clear on before deciding to implement a CMS are: how you expect a CMS to contribute to your business goals and what resources you are willing to invest in the implementation and ongoing administration of the system.

Your business goals, and the resources that you are able to commit, will determine the scope of the CMS and the speed at which it can be implemented.

Beyond the monetary cost of running a CMS, which is relatively small, you will need to invest time in training your people on how to use the system, and spend time communicating the benefits and getting buy-in from the seafarers who are expected to use it. Once the system is in place and active, you will want to continue to monitor the results of assessments, schedule training when it is clear that a competency is missing, and continue to evaluate which competencies are included in your CMS.

Ingrid Grønsberg, Courses and CMS Manager at Ocean Technologies Group, has played a key role in building some of our newest and widely used competency standards.

She says "Introducing a CMS into a business is a long-term investment. After the system is designed and implemented, it's vital to allocate resources for ongoing evaluation, support, and development, ensuring it consistently meets evolving business and crew requirements."

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Two key things to be clear on before deciding to implement a CMS:

1

How you expect CMS to contribute to your business goals.

2

What resources you are willing to invest in the implementation and ongoing administration of the system.

Common drivers for implementing a CMS are:

Improve safety and reduce exposure to risk.

For compliance, e.g. to meet TMSA requirements.

To develop crew skills to meet current and future needs.

To be considered a top performer in your market.

A HR requirement, e.g. a need for clearer career progression paths.

2

The consultation

A good CMS provider will use the consultation to really understand your business goals, your drivers for implementing a CMS, and what resources can be assigned to the project.

Understanding your challenges, defining the goals for your CMS and understanding the resources you have available to support implementation, will also help determine whether it makes sense to start with an industry standard, an Ocean Technologies Group standard, or a completely bespoke set of competencies.

Gytis Stankevicius, Competence Management Administrator Ocean Technologies Group, has supported many OTG customers through the design and implementation of their CMS and is passionate about the value of the consultancy stage. He says "Our relationships with our CMS clients are that of partners and we approach each implementation is very collaborative. We have built competencies with industry bodies and many clients, so bring extensive expertise and a proven track record, and we recognise that every client has distinct goals. Our primary task in the consultation phase is to deeply understand a customer's requirements, so we can create a CMS strategy that's tailored to their needs."

There are many reasons for implementing a CMS and your consultation will help you determine whether a CMS is the best suited solution to achieve the goals you have in mind.

The consultation period is also a time to lean on the expertise already in your business and to build 'buy-in' from internal stakeholders.

Assembling a pool of subject matter experts from the relevant areas in your business at this stage will pay dividends in the long run and will help guarantee that what you design will be beneficial to business. Your subject matter experts can be a group of between two and eight of the people who:

Involving key stakeholders from an early stage, specifically those who will use the system once it is in place, pays dividends in the long run.

a) have done (or are doing) the jobs covered by the competencies;

b) will be assessing the mariners;

c) will be using the system aboard vessel and/or in shoreside offices.

The most successful implementations result from good communication. Your business is full of knowledgeable and passionate people, getting their input before you begin designing your CMS gives you the benefit of their experience, the opportunity to address their concerns, and can make them early ambassadors of the system.

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As well as designing the competencies themselves, this is the time to start considering how you will roll them out once the system is ready. Do you need to cover one vessel type, or a fleet with multiple vessel types? Who will need access to the information coming out of the system? How will you train the assessors and get the seafarers to understand the value of your CMS?

Again, if you have chosen a good CMS provider as your partner for building your system, they will be able to help you answer these questions and to make a plan for an effective rollout.

Designing the competencies is where your subject matter experts come into their own.

Your experts will enable you to set very clear competencies by role and responsibility. As in most cases, your experts will have performed the roles themselves, they will be perfectly placed to help set criteria that will make sense to the mariners who will be assessed.

As explained by Gytis Stankevicius: "The length of the design phase differs from company to company, largely influenced by the degree of customisation and the resources allocated for system implementation. What matters most is delivering the right solution, and we are committed to taking the necessary time to ensure its success."

A common misconception is that the more competencies you build in your CMS, the more effective it will be. While adding competencies for the sake of it may make your system look more comprehensive, the reality can be that long lists of competencies and complex systems lowers engagement from the crew and the assessors.

Starting small, and growing through planned escalation, is a recipe for success.

We suggest starting small with a few well selected competencies to get people used to the system and invested in it, and then adding competencies as their confidence and commitment grows.

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There are two distinct categories of implementation: technical and procedural.

Technical implementation consists of the software setup and hardware installations. This includes inputting the competencies into your custom database, which your CMS provider will handle, and installing any necessary hardware aboard the vessels.

The procedural side of implementation is what will set you up for success. Communicating the value of the CMS to the internal stakeholders, the seafarers, and anyone else who will use the CMS, will help ensure they willingly invest time to learn and use the system. The Ocean Learning Platform has a range of tools designed to make communicating with users and crew far easier. Utilising these can help speed up the rollout of, and improve the engagement with, your CMS.

Approaches to communicating CMS vary from business to business, and you will need to decide what works for you based on what resources you have. Whatever you decide, do not underestimate the value of getting 'buy-in' from the mariners themselves.

One Ocean Technologies Group client, Anthony Veder, chose to create internal promotional videos to communicate the value of CMS and how to get the most out of it. This has proven to be an engaging and effective way to quickly communicate CMS to a wider audience.

Your subject matter experts can be a great asset to communicate your CMS when it comes time to roll it out

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As they have played an instrumental role in defining the competencies, your subject matter experts are perfectly placed to explain the value of the CMS within your organisation. Additionally, as most of your subject matter experts are likely to be seafarers themselves, they will be trusted by the crew as a fellow mariners.

We have seen great success from companies that use CMS as a tool for career mapping and promotions. This is one of the greatest benefits and incentives to getting crew to actively adopt a CMS. A well-designed CMS clearly illustrates to an individual seafarer both what is expected of them in their current rank, and what they must be competent in to move up to the next rank.

At Ocean Technologies Group, we have seen that this clear roadmap for career progression drives adoption of CMS more than anything else. Mariners are motivated to complete competencies so they can apply for higher ranks. Through the CMS, this information is made available both to senior officers and office staff ashore; as such, it is far easier to accurately and consistently select the correct crew for promotion – or decline to promote crew based on results rather than opinion.

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The feedback loop

The reality of implementing a CMS is that the process is ongoing. Once your CMS is up and running, you will start collecting data and begin acting upon it. This feedback will help you to identify any gaps in competence and to then make a plan to tackle these shortfalls in skills. Additionally, you will quickly start to receive feedback from assessors and those being assessed.

Listening to feedback and being flexible with what goes into your CMS is an important part of ensuring it remains fit-for-purpose and continues to deliver the results you need.

Ingrid explains "As businesses expand and evolve, their objectives, priorities, and what they expect from their crew naturally evolves. It's crucial that a CMS and the competencies within are flexible enough to align with these shifting operational and business needs."

Once again, this is where your pool of subject matter experts can contribute. As experts in their own areas, and the competencies themselves, they are your 'super-users' and 'eyes on the ground' that will be able to give you some of the most valuable feedback. They are also are perfectly placed to use their experience to help you overcome any teething problems, get the most out of your system and plan for improvements.

CMA CGM successfully use their subject matter experts to improve adoption and buy-in aboard ship.

Your CMS provider is also an invaluable resource when you are evaluating feedback and assessing the effectiveness of your competency management system. If you have a provider with established links with regulatory and industry bodies, they will be able to advise you and keep you ahead of the curve when it comes to new regulations or shift in trends.

"The subject matter experts who helped design the CMS spend time aboard our vessels as advocates and mentors. They are there to answer questions, explain the value of competencies and to collect feedback."

CMA CGM

Investing in a competency management system shows a real commitment and desire to set your business apart from the crowd and take it to the next level. Choosing Ocean Technologies Group to be your CMS partner gives you access to our expertise and the benefit of our partnerships with governing bodies, regulators and industry experts. Ocean Technologies Group has 60 years' collective experience to create the biggest data-rich picture of learning and development behaviour in maritime history.

If you have any questions, or would like to speak with one of our experts about implementing a CMS, you can contact us here **or email:** contact@oceantg.com

Why choose Ocean CMS?

➕ We provide bespoke implementations, tailored to your business needs.

➕ We offer a phased approach, allowing you to start small, and scale up as you see the need.

➕ We are pioneers in competency management and have the experience to help navigate you from CMS implementation through to success.

All the content you need to get started today.

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