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# Compass Guide to Component Content Management Systems Q4 2021

## Evaluation of IXIASOFT CCMS

**By:** Tony White



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# IXIASOFT CCMS Product Evaluation

**By:** Tony White

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## ARS LOGICA POSITION

IXIASOFT CCMS is the only 100% DITA-compliant component content management product among the market's three leading platforms, having been designed and optimized from the repository layer up to manage the full component lifecycle within a DITA XML universe. It leads the industry in a number of Ars Logica's technical evaluative categories, including Dynamic Delivery; Taxonomy and Semantics; Scalability; and Flexibility (ranked first/co-first in each category). It also performs well across the business categories, with particular strengths in Component Lifecycle Management; and Process Efficiency and Cost Containment.

## NOTES & RESOURCES

### Sources of Information

Some company and product information contained in this report was collected via Ars Logica's vendor questionnaires. Vendor responses were independently verified through customer interviews, implementation monitoring, product documentation, Ars Logica's knowledge base, and/or hands-on product testing.

### Platforms Included

The Compass Guides include the platforms that Ars Logica considers to be the most significant in the CCMS market. While scores on our business and technology scorecards vary widely, each platform evaluated will be a best-fit given the right use case, and may therefore prove worthy of shortlisting.

### Customer Interviews

Ars Logica has interviewed users of every product covered in the Compass Guides, including IXIASOFT CCMS.

### Implementation Monitoring

Since the 1990s, Ars Logica founder Tony White has kept close tabs on ongoing content management implementations. Some of this knowledge is represented in the Compass Guide reports.

### No Vendor Influence

Ars Logica retains complete editorial control over the Compass Guides and receives no funding in their production.

## IXIASOFT Vendor Overview

IXIASOFT produces a market-leading range of tools and technologies centered around XML and DITA. Since IXIASOFT's founding in 1998, its TEXTML Server and IXIASOFT CCMS products – along with direct involvement in the creation of the first version of DITA – have kept the vendor at the forefront of technology evolution in the areas of meta-language development and format-independent information exchange. Currently, the vendor focuses narrowly on the upper end of the CCMS market and offers the industry's most technically sophisticated pure DITA XML component content management system, a fact which may at first seem to be at odds with its small size.

### Company Profile

Year Founded: 1998  
Headquarters: Montreal, Canada  
Employees (or FTE equivalents): 65  
Geographies: Global  
Revenue: \$20 million (estimated)  
Product Types Offered: Component content management, XML repository  
Commercial or Open Source: Commercial  
Strategic Implementation Partners: Comtech, Etteplan, JANA, Knowledge on Demand, Mekon, Parsons, Rockley Group, Ryffine, Yamagata Intech  
Top Competitors: Adobe, SDL  
Key Vertical Industries: Manufacturing, medical devices, semiconductor, software development, telecommunications

### Product Profile

Product Name: IXIASOFT CCMS  
Version: 6.4  
Next version release date: Q1 2022  
Market segment: Enterprise  
Average Sales Price (License Only): \$ / € 150,000  
Technology Platform: Primarily Java  
Key Strengths: Full DITA compliance, robust multi-channel publishing, extreme scalability, excellent taxonomy and semantics functionality, excellent architectural flexibility, full component lifecycle management  
Key Limitations: Limited market presence compared to competitors, strength of technical ecosystem relative to top competitors, unsuitable for customers not pursuing full DITA compliance  
Highest-Value Use Case: Large enterprise deployment of technical publishing solution whose top requirements include 100% DITA compliance, robust workflow tools, containment of localization costs, and improving process efficiency

## Vendor History & Product Evolution

Founded in Montreal in 1998, IXIASOFT has been at the forefront of XML application development from the origins of the XML market itself. By 2000, IXIASOFT had developed TEXTML, an XML repository for the publishing industry. Technical validation of the product in the publishing industry came immediately, as did adoption of the platform by organizations such as Reader's Digest and The Canadian Press.

From late 1999 through early 2008, IXIASOFT's TEXTML Server was used not only by its own customers, but also disseminated more widely through its embedding into third-party content management, digital asset management, and other XML-based platforms of various kinds. In January 2008, for example, Condé Nast began leveraging TEXTML Server's storage and search capabilities in its publications *Vogue*, *The New Yorker*, *GQ*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Wired*, through its embedding into NStein Technologies' content management products (since acquired by OpenText). Examples like this abounded in the industry prior to IXIASOFT's March 2008 launch of its own stand-alone platform, DITA CMS v2.1, at which point the vendor began making regular announcements of customer wins such as ADP, Abbott Labs, Ericsson, HP, Mastercard, Qualcomm, SAP, Sybase, and Teradata.

As the product documentation sections of IXIASOFT's current and archived websites show in feature-by-feature detail (at least from DITA CMS v3.4 onward), the years 2008 through 2017 witnessed the steady incremental evolution of the platform – nothing ground-breaking or surprising – just the methodical growth of a technology stack that started cleaner than the rest and managed to stay ahead. In December 2017, the platform was renamed "IXIASOFT CCMS," which was perhaps the conceptual beginning of a shift in the vendor's offerings that acknowledged the role of the subject matter expert (SME) in the technical documentation authoring process – one whose conclusion would not be fully reached until the release of v5.2 in February 2019. The evolutionary themes of the 6.x versions have primarily centered around the transition from an on-premise Eclipse-based offering toward a SaaS-based Web platform offering improvements in usability, contextualization, and collaborative workflow.

## Key Recent Developments

v6.0 – Along with major UI improvements over v5.2, this release focuses on adding web-based tools for DITA specialists, such as full-text and faceted search; granular map, topic, and image editing; and enhanced user management. // v6.1 – Improved contextualization through enhanced content-output management and classification. // v6.2 – Deeper-level search and cross-search, improved ditaval management, simplification of collaborative workflow processes, synthesized document-level view of multiple topics. // v6.3 – 100% web-based collaborative workflow, holistic document map view, enhanced Web UI. // v6.4 – Quicker modification of document map dependencies, simplifying movement of content across workflows; improved processing speed and scalability of the platform.

## Profiling the Ideal Buyer

The ideal buyer of IXIASOFT CCMS is the large organization that prioritizes full DITA compliance in its efforts to include both non-technical SMEs and DITA experts in collaborative, technical-information creation, management, and delivery processes. Specific decision criteria often include: (1) process efficiency and cost containment in localizing content, (2) dynamic content delivery free of format-and-destination constraints, (3) robust taxonomy and semantics capabilities, (4) extreme scalability, and (5) platform flexibility.

- **Full DITA Compliance**

IXIASOFT is the only top-tier CCMS vendor whose 100% DITA compliance is absolutely unquestionable. At this tier of the market, other vendors may achieve near-compliance or offer non-DITA alternatives in some parts of their platforms that provide higher value for certain customers. Other products at the mid and lower tiers of the market also achieve full DITA compliance.

- **Multi-Channel Publishing**

Dynamic content delivery/integration free from format-and-destination constraints are part of the IXIASOFT DNA. As a pioneer of both XML and DITA, the vendor's products have maintained leadership in this area from the outset.

- **Robust Taxonomy and Semantics Support**

In a category referring to the hierarchical structure of component content authoring environments as well as to the metadata functions required for metatagging content, it should come as no surprise that the creator of the first XML database and co-author of the DITA 1.0 specification ranks co-first among all vendors evaluated. Of the voting membership on the OASIS DITA Committee, 18% are IXIASOFT employees or customers.

## IXIASOFT CCMS Will Not Be a Good Fit, If...

IXIASOFT CCMS will likely not work for prospective customers who: (1) are not ready to commit to full DITA compliance, (2) do not plan to use an XML repository for component content, and to a lesser degree, (3) already use a DITA-compliant solution for component content. The first item in this list is a showstopper – if you're not ready for DITA, don't consider IXIASOFT. The second item is a bit fuzzier, in that one of the primary advantages of using an XML repository instead of a traditional database for storing component content is that the repository already understands how XML works, effectively removing a layer of processing. However, it would still be *possible* to use a database. The third item assumes that the prospective customer has already invested considerable time and energy into constructing a DITA-compliant solution, and will thus have reduced interest in a DITA-compliant replacement.

## Key Product Strengths

IXIASOFT CCMS excels in a number of evaluative categories in our scorecards for both business users and technologists. Disregarding Strength of Technical Ecosystem, the platform garners the top ranking in four of the five remaining technical categories. Put simply, it is the market’s most technically capable CCMS from a functional perspective. The lower rating for its technical ecosystem stems indirectly, but wholly, from the vast difference in size between IXIASOFT and the other top-tier vendors.

First, IXIASOFT’s origins as a producer of DITA-based XML applications, combined with its best-of-breed product architecture (first place ranking for Flexibility), result in dynamic delivery options to the widest possible range of information channels: PDF, Web, embedded help tools (Eclipse Help, troff), e-learning modules, chatbot software, IoT devices, AI platforms, and Markdown variants.

Second, the platform’s top ranking for Scalability results from a combination of the technical underpinnings of IXIASOFT’s XML repository, its customers consisting of only large enterprises, and its existential dependence upon the ability to integrate well with the most scalable of third-party enterprise platforms. For some readers, the first-place ranking in this category may seem to belie the fact that a sixty-

**FIGURE 1** IXIASOFT CCMS, Key Product Strengths and Limitations

**Below are several key product strengths and limitations that potential buyers should keep in mind when assembling vendor shortlists.**

KEY STRENGTHS	KEY LIMITATIONS
Superb multi-channel publishing capabilities	Respectable strength of technical ecosystem, but not on par with top few competitors
Extreme scalability (ranked co-first among all platforms evaluated)	Limited market presence compared to the other top-tier platforms (and even to some lower-tier products)
Excellent taxonomy and semantics functionality (co-ranked first among all platforms evaluated)	Unsuitable for customers not ready for 100% DITA compliance
Excellent architectural flexibility (ranked first among all platforms evaluated)	
Robust component lifecycle management and process efficiency & cost containment (ranked second in each category among all platforms evaluated)	

Source: Ars Logica, Inc.

Sources of information: product testing, customer interviews, vendor briefings and questionnaires

employee vendor's product can scale as well as those from its top two competitors, which employ multiple thousands, and multiple tens of thousands, respectively. The truth is that those platforms had to incorporate design compromises in order to integrate tightly with the rest of their product suites – and that IXIASOFT specializes at the market's topmost stratum.

Next, IXIASOFT garners a co-first ranking for Taxonomy & Semantics – the granularity and nimbleness with which it handles hierarchical relationships, manages metadata functions, and fosters content discovery/reuse at the topic level are second-to-none. For some customers – including those not prioritizing DITA compliance – the value derived from use cases made possible by the suite-based functionality of other vendors' offerings may surpass the value of IXIASOFT's granularity and nimbleness. For those customers interested in DITA compliance, but who are not there yet, it will be important to keep in mind that certain DITA standards – such as keys – are intrinsically XML-based, and non-XML based applications (relational databases, for example) will need to make approximations which may not work as intended by the specification.

Finally, in Component Lifecycle Management – the largest feature-functional category among those of interest to business users – the platform ranks second among all platforms evaluated. The same is true of Process Efficiency & Cost Containment, an area that not many immediately describe as a top purchase-decision criterion, but which appears in the language of nearly every RFP.

## Key Product Limitations

The strongest negatives for IXIASOFT CCMS relate directly and indirectly to the small size of the vendor. First, although awareness of the product has always been strong among DITA experts, its presence in the marketplace outside of technical documentation departments is quite small. Recent evolution of the platform to support non-technical users in the collaborative technical-content authoring process may begin to alleviate the marketshare problem, but not without a substantial marketing investments by IXIASOFT. And though the vendor has a significant number of meaningful technology partnerships, its roster of implementation partners is – though good – fairly limited.

From architectural and feature-functional perspectives, there are no real limitations to address. From a weighted overall score of 8.19 in the five highest-level evaluative categories for business users, the platform deviates by only -0.3/+0.2 (see Figure 2). And to provide perspective without the handicap of the 6.3 score for Strength of Technical Ecosystem, IXIASOFT CCMS would have a weighted score of 8.69 in the six highest-level evaluative categories for technologists, with a variation of -1.1/+0.4. With the ecosystem score, the actual overall weighted technical score is 8.10 with a variation of -1.8/+1.0 (See Figure 3).

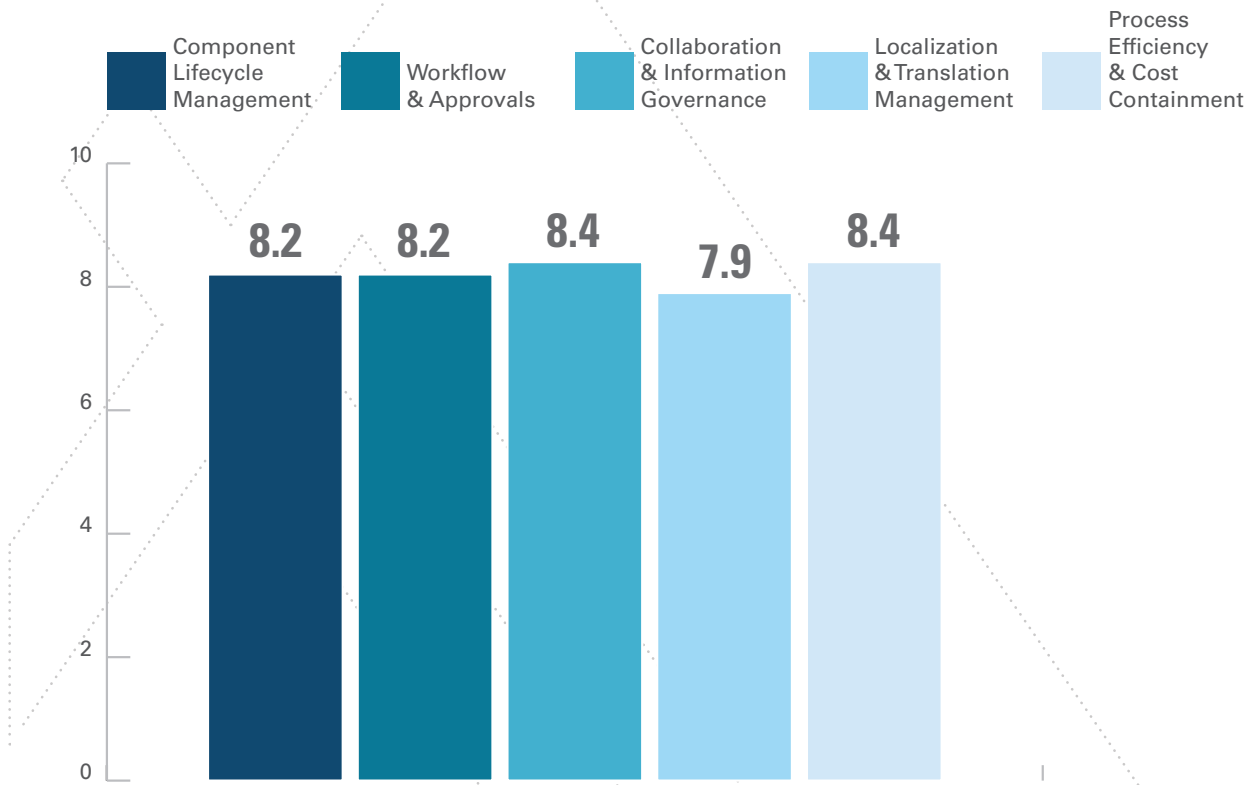


## Vendor/Product Report Cards

The features, functions, and technical underpinnings of CCMS products vary considerably, as do the customer requirements they are intended to satisfy. For this reason, the only reliable way to assure the best product fit for a particular client is to spend anywhere from several weeks to several months assessing the client's specific needs and analyzing product capabilities line by line. Still, Ars Logica is frequently asked to rate products in categories such as those in Figures 2 and 3. While the average scores across these categories might be the same for two products, proper weighting will often cause the overall scores to diverge significantly.

**FIGURE 2** IXIASOFT CCMS Report Card for the Business User

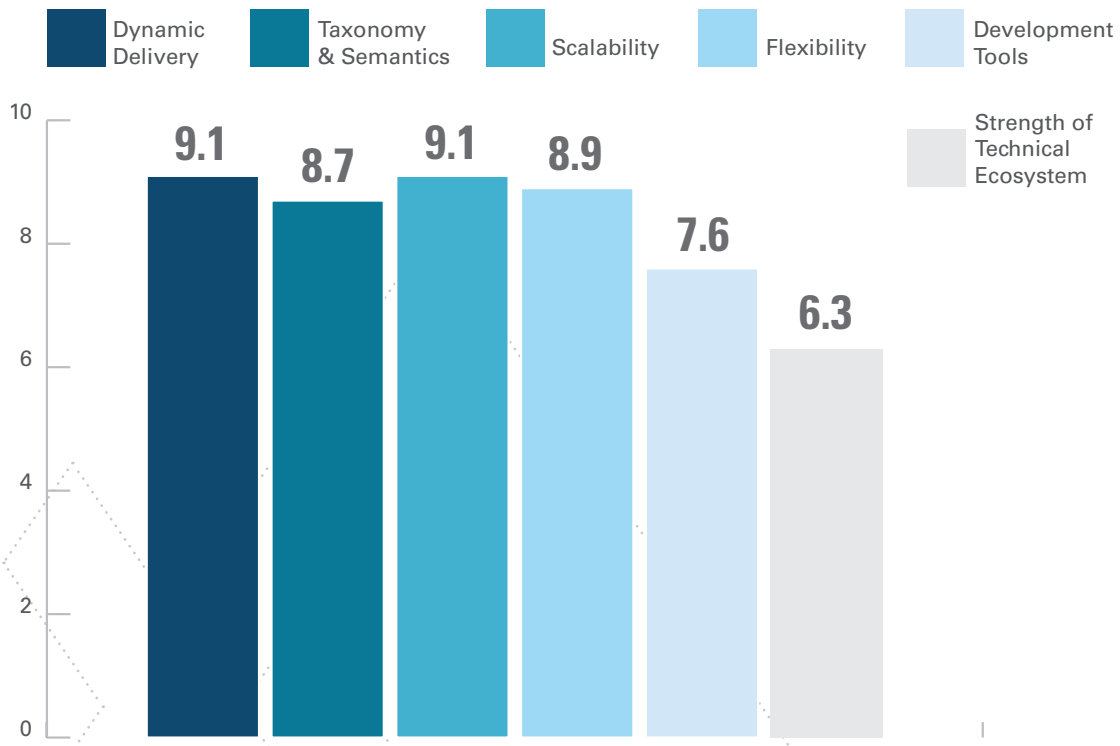
Figure 2 shows Ars Logica's rating of IXIASOFT CCMS in five CCMS categories of critical importance to business users. Refer to Page 11 for an explanation of the evaluation criteria.



Sources of information: product testing, customer interviews, vendor briefings and questionnaires

**FIGURE 3** IXIASOFT CCMS Report Card for Technologists

Figure 3 shows Ars Logica's rating of IXIASOFT CCMS in six CCMS categories of critical importance to technologists. Refer to Page 12 for an explanation of the evaluation criteria.



Sources of information: product testing, customer interviews, vendor briefings and questionnaires

## Report Card Evaluation Criteria

### Criteria for Business Users

- **Component Lifecycle Management**

Managing the full lifecycle of content components harnesses a wide range of tools and feature-functionality – along with entire evaluative subcategories such as DITA compliance – including: content authoring/editing for SMEs; content discovery and reuse; content annotation and collaboration; dynamic content assembly; component versioning; component auditing and reporting; content/component retention and archiving; library services; repository capabilities; and output options.

- **Workflow & Approvals**

Authors need intuitive tools to move and control content through complex production processes – to individuals, groups, and agencies both inside and outside the enterprise. Feature-functionality represented here include linear modeling and approvals; workflow branching and merging; conditional approvals; auto-escalation; graphical workflow builders; and the ability to ensure regulatory compliance.

- **Collaboration & Information Governance**

As the role of subject matter experts as content authors grows, technical content creation processes are transcending departmental boundaries – spreading out both organizationally and geographically to distributed documentation teams. This category assesses the agility and security of location-independent, structured, collaborative authoring processes.

- **Localization & Translation Management**

For enterprises doing business in multiple languages, delivering consistently compelling user experiences requires a strategic approach to content translation. Not only must translated content remain free of obvious linguistic inaccuracies, it must also be contextually relevant – to businesses, consumers, and machines – based on geography, country, dialect, industry, role, department, application, device, touchpoint, time, and logic. This category assesses a platform’s ability to deliver specific, error-free, contextually correct content in such highly variable situations.

- **Process Efficiency & Cost Containment**

The highly structured nature of component content implies that platforms in this category manage only format-free, purely modular, reusable content. When this is the case, the organic pieces of unified business processes such as “go to market initiatives” can be made to scale very efficiently. When this is not the case, the same processes tend to stall or fail, with costs that spiral out of control. This category assesses a platform’s demonstrated ability to streamline – at scale – the content-and-context aspects of such business processes while simultaneously containing costs.

## Criteria for Technologists

- **Dynamic Delivery**

This category refers to a product's ability to deliver content to any information channel, regardless of format or destination point. This includes traditional delivery to PDF, Web, help, and e-learning modules, as well as integration with chatbot software, IoT devices, and AI platforms.

- **Taxonomy & Semantics**

This category refers to the hierarchical structure of content authoring environments, which drives site organization and URL structures, as well as to the metadata functions required for metatagging content, essential for effective content discovery and personalized customer experiences.

- **Scalability**

Scalability refers to the ability of a product to function well as system demands increase. Factors contributing to scalability are database size, query efficiency, bandwidth consumption, ease of system management, caching efficiency, load balancing, and mass content deployment capabilities.

- **Flexibility**

Flexibility denotes the ability to integrate with existing infrastructure, including operating systems, Web servers, databases, directories, development tools, and other enterprise applications. In the component content space, better adherence to DITA standards usually results in higher flexibility scores because of improved interoperability with other DITA-compliant systems.

- **Development Tools**

This category describes the quality of a product's development environment, the technologies it incorporates, and overall ease of customized application development. This category refers primarily to development frameworks, but other supporting applications are also included, such as XML editors, content conversion applications, specialized output engines, content optimization tools, and any other functionality that enables or eases the installation, development, and customization of CCMS implementations.

- **Strength of Technical Ecosystem**

Though component content management products have existed for more than 20 years, users of these applications have worked primarily in technical documentation departments, whose requirements vary greatly from company to company due to size, budget, geography, language, vertical industry, communication channels, and other individual differences. As a result, no two CCMS implementations are the same. With such a divergent implementation landscape, strength of the technical ecosystem – which determines options for outside expertise – becomes hugely important. This category estimates the strength of the third-party technical ecosystem available for customers to leverage.



## SERVICES

### Advisory Services

Ars Logica is a vendor-neutral analyst firm helping companies evaluate their digital experience requirements and select appropriate software. To address clients' questions and concerns that arise throughout the year, Ars Logica offers unlimited direct analyst access through its Analyst Anytime advisory services. These annual, subscription-based services provide guidance by phone or email within 24 hours on a wide range of issues. The number of inquiries submitted throughout the year is not limited.

### Software and Technology Selection

In our technology selection engagements, Ars Logica maps clients' functional, technological, and strategic requirements to potential software platforms and identifies the vendors whose products best satisfy these requirements. We maintain a continuously updated comprehensive matrix of the feature-functionality of most digital experience vendors' products and solutions. We receive frequent briefings from these vendors and have in-depth conversations and consulting engagements with their customers, ensuring that we always understand the actual state of vendors' offerings as well as their forward-looking strategic directions.

### Custom Engagements

Ars Logica's expertise in technologies such as web content management, digital experience management, digital asset management, marketing campaign management, enterprise search, and portals, gives us the open-ended ability to help clients on a wide range of projects, including: building internal business cases, assessing technology requirements, analyzing software products and vendors, selecting and assembling software solutions, crafting digital strategies, and running corporate educational seminars. We also assist vendors in developing strategic roadmaps, and we present our view of the digital experience market at industry conferences and end-user events.

## Contact

Tel: +1 617.943.5611  
30 Newbury Street  
Third Floor  
Boston, MA 02116  
[consulting@arslogica.com](mailto:consulting@arslogica.com)  
[www.arslogica.com](http://www.arslogica.com)