

How to choose a Joomla extension or add-on

Contributed by Administrator
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What's the best extension for this?
What's the best add-on for that?

These questions are as difficult to answer as "What's the best position for sex?" A lot of times it depends on what you've used and who you're sleeping with. But do your best to not fall asleep and we just might "learn" you a thing or two about choosing the right extension/add-on for your Joomla site. The process is very similar to the one followed when choosing a CMS to develop your site... But wait a second, most of my "readers" are non-readers, and lazy-researchers. You probably just googled "free cms" saw the word Joomla, thought it was cool, and decided to use it... Forget about that process and let's start from scratch here.

Security. This should be the first thing in mind when selecting a Joomla extension/add-on. They say a chain is as strong as the weakest link, well your Joomla install is as secure as your most vulnerable extension/add-on. Once you've found something that does what you want, visit the 3rd Party/Non Joomla! Security Issues forum and see if there's anything listed there that might bring down the fire on your site if installed. Don't forget to do a Google search on the extension/add-on name and the word security, exploit, or vulnerability.

Community, users, and groupies. Joomla has one of the biggest, if not the biggest of any of the open source CMS out there. Your choice of extension/add-on should have a solid following. A homepage with an active forum where the admins participate is a good sign. See how long a forum posts go unanswered, or how quickly they are resolved. All of these things translate to "Support". Send the developer(s) an email letting them know how "great" their contribution is (even if you've never used it), and see how long it takes for them to response. Sure they might be busy hacking away, but how long does it really take to respond with a "Thanks"?

Availability. Where is this extension available for download? The Joomla Extensions directory (JED) is the nuno uno place with almost 2000 (as of 8/1/2007). It is probably not a good idea to download and install extensions/add-ons from fat-back-extensions.com. While you're at the download or reference site checkout any comments, recommendations, or reviews people are leaving about the extension/add-on. Take it a step further, and pay attention to who leaves the comments. Look at the comments they leave for other extensions/add-ons. Stay away from the fools that comment just to comment, and are real quick to criticize, and the other fools that call everything "great".

Longevity/Lifespan/Releases. How long has the extension/add-on been around? I will try to stay away from

version 0.0.0.1. When was the last release? 299 days ago versus 30 or 60 days ago, or even last week. I wouldn't recommend it if it looks abandoned. You might be shite outta luck if you need any kind of support in the future.

Licensing/Cost. Open source, creative commons, pay-ware, registration-ware, etc. How much money you got?

In a nutshell:
Security, community, availability, longevity, licensing. I will call it the SCALL model.

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