



# Tabula Rasa – CMS by Synergy Ecommerce Solutions

## Documentation

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## Chapter 1 – Introduction

### a. Purpose

TR was initially developed as a proprietary CMS tool for our company to sell to our clients when designing sites for them, having evaluated other CMS' and found them either to be too unstable or have too many features we opted to develop a proprietary system which would serve our needs more sufficiently as designers.

We quickly discovered that our clients (Individuals to mid-size firms) wanted sporadic updates to the content on their sites, some more than others at completely varying time periods, we also found it would be bad for business to charge for the smaller updates (and not necessarily possible!) and realised that the only way around this time-consuming & revenue depleting task was to empower our clients.

Thus we needed a way to give our clients the flexibility to manage their own content without the complexity of some CMS applications. This meant naturally a database-backed website.

TR was born – realising it was a benefit to our clients (and the fact that by making a site dynamic the cost factor for a web site jumps slightly), we thought we should share this ability with the world.

### b. Targets

The target for Tabula Rasa is web designers – pure designers that operate in the realm of aesthetics instead of code. Many large companies will separate these roles (the design from the implementation), but many web designers operate independently and either need to know both or are specialised in only one area of the design process.

What Tabula Rasa enables you to do is to design your website in a graphics package (e.g. Photoshop), slice it up into its constituent parts and turn it into a webpage – then add a single tag to the area where you would like your content to appear and voila – your new TR website is ready to go.

Naturally TR has many more features, but at its simplest level, TR enables the web designer complete design freedom while supporting the entire site with a manageable and secure back office.

### c. One Step Further

Tabula Rasa goes even further for the web designer selling dynamic websites to clients – with a brandable and skinnable back office.

Since TR's back office runs on the same template engine that it's Front utilises, it is easy for the web designer to change the look and feel of the back-office to suit their own brand, while also enabling them to limit client access to areas of the back office (by omitting them from the new design), thus increasing the value of your service to your client, allowing for better revenue's and a better client relationship.

Furthermore, Synergy Ecommerce Solutions will give you the right to re-sell the re-branded TR to your clients; we will also offer transparent support for the back-office should your clients need it<sup>1</sup>.

## Chapter 2 – Installation

Installation of Tabula Rasa has been made as easy as possible, it is advised that prior to installation your domain / hosting arrangements meet the system requirements set out below:

1. Access to an SQL 2000 Server Database (*not* MySQL)
2. A Windows Host (2003)
3. A Hosting account which supports the ASP .NET 2.0 framework

If these requirements are met then you should continue with the installation as follows:

### a. Automatic Install

Step 1 – Unzip the compressed archive to a folder on your hard disk (or, alternatively, unzip the file directly to your domain's application root directory<sup>2</sup>).

Step 2 – Alter the /bin/dbconfig.cfg file to suit your Database settings

Step 3 – Upload the folder to your domain's document root directory using an FTP program such as SmartFTP.

Step 4 – Use a browser (we recommend Firefox) to go to your domain, you should be presented with the Tabula Rasa Logo, click "Start" (if not, go to to: <http://www.yourdomain.com/install/>)

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<sup>1</sup> This is a service offered by SES – for more details on OEM and resale licensing of Tabula Rasa please visit the Tabula Rasa website

<sup>2</sup> It is possible to install TR into a folder beneath your domains root directory, so long as the domain is registered as an ASP .NET 2.0 application the system should work.

Step 5 – Follow the On-Screen Instructions, please make sure the database username and password you give are correct and that you remember your administrator password.

Step 5 – Once the installation script says it is finished, you can either click the “Log In” link or go straight to the TR Control panel anytime by going to the following URL:

<http://www.YOURDOMAIN.com/admin/>

If the above procedure went well then the system has been installed and you can start configuring it to your liking (Please see Chapter 3 – The Back Office).

## b. Manual Installation

If for some reason you do not wish to run the installation script or something goes dreadfully wrong then you can try to install the system manually. In order to do so, please follow these steps:

Step 1 – Log into the SQL server using a tool such as “SQL Server Management Studio Express CTP” or “EMS’ SQL Manger 2005 for SQL Server Lite”, these are both free tools that can be downloaded from the internet.

Step 2 – You will need to execute a query on your database so click on “Open File” and browse to the directory where you decompressed the application, select the file “*DBStruc.sql*” from the *install/data/* folder.

Step 3 – Once the script is opened, make sure you select which database to run the script on (you can select this in the drop down at the top-left of the CTP SQL Client.

Step 4 – Right click somewhere in the script and select the “Execute” option.

Step 5 – If everything went well your database is now set up, next you need to configure the app t use your new database, using notepad or any other text editor, create a new document and write the following into the document (each statement on an individual line):

```
Your Server's Address (IP or otherwise)
The name of the database
Your username
Your database password
```

Save this file as *database.cfg* in the applications */Bin/* directory.

Step 6 – Upload the application to your server's document root directory, make sure the directory structure remains intact.

**Step 7** – delete the *index.html* (or rename it) in the application root folder.

**Step 8** – You will need to manually enter a password into the database, the admin password can be set up by adding a record to the TR\_Admin\_UserList table – use your database tool to fill in the username and password fields and save the table

**Step 9** – Try to log in by going to the URL:

<http://www.YOURDOMAIN.com/admin>

If everything went correctly then the application should let you log in and present with the default settings. Please continue to Chapter 3, if you still have trouble installing, It is suggested tat one reads the troubleshooting guide at the end of the document before emailing SES with any questions.

## Chapter 3 – The Back Office

### a. The Content Manager

| Related Tags Chart: |                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tag                 | Description                                                                                                                      |
| <tem:content>       | Main content field where site text (entered in content editor) will appear when rendered.                                        |
| <tem:contentn>      | Secondary content field (e.g. footer), <i>n</i> can be 1, 2 or 3 to represent up to 3 additional content fields in one template. |
| <tem:title>         | Displays the Title of the Page                                                                                                   |
| <tem:BuyNow>        | Paypal Button – Buy Now                                                                                                          |
| <tem:AddToCart>     | Paypal Button – Add To Cart                                                                                                      |
| <tem:CheckOut>      | Paypal Button – Checkout                                                                                                         |

\*All Paypal buttons require products to be registered and set for page

The content manager is really the heart of TR's functionality as it allows the designer/user to enter the content for pages stored in the database. TR is built from the ground up with internationalisation in mind and so all pages have a language code and will need to be referenced accordingly, by default, that language code is set to English, however this can be changed from within the *System Config* menu.

### System Pages

TR comes with several pages pre-installed: the *index*, *contact*, *Message\_Sent*, *search* and *signup* pages. These pages cater to some of the other features of the TR system should you chose to use them – they can be safely ignored if they are not in use except for *index*, which is your default

main page (and serves the same function as *index.html* in a regular design environment),

## Content Fields & Scope

Each page in the Tabula Rasa system comes with a total of four content fields, meaning you can dynamically change up to four separate areas in a particular page on a page-by-page basis.

For example, the default *Index* page uses 2 content fields, the main content and the footer, in order to view them simply select English > index > Field1 (or Field 2) and click on “Go”, this will let you edit the two content fields in the index page.

To save the changes, simply click “Update” and the currently selected page field will update.

Please note that Field 1 is always displayed as it is the primary content field and will always be rendered.

How many fields are used depends on the *Scope* variable – you can set this from 1 to 3 (1 is the default value), this tells the page whether or not to display the additional content fields (you may not wish to render certain content, or switch off areas of the page). Please note that the numbers are cumulative so a setting of 1 means the first content field, a setting of 2 means the first *and* second content field and a setting of three means Fields 1, 2 *and* 3.

## Page Properties

Each page can be configured to various levels of sophistication using this table, to enable maximum flexibility for the design team.

1. *Title* – this is the title setting of the page, it will appear both in the header of the browser and in the <tem:title> tag, if the field is set and no <tem:title> tag is present then the system will render the title anyway at the bottom of the page – it is recommended that if this is set that the title tag be used somewhere on the page to prevent this.
2. *Scope* – The amount of content fields to be rendered on the page (max 4)
3. *Template* – The default is *~/content\_template.htm*, however if you wish to differentiate the page from the rest of the site, you can use a different template here (e.g. to differentiate between the index and content pages of a site). This setting is language specific, so a different template can be used for different language groups.
4. *Visible* – Should the page be visible if viewed, if this is set to false then the page will display a message stating the page is no longer available.
5. *Locked* – If the site is using the User Manger feature then this setting will cause the page to be locked from non-system users and they will

be asked to login instead (this can be helpful if you want to restrict content to registered users only)

## Paypal Options

If the page you are creating is selling something (for example you could use the locked feature and template feature to create a user-only shopping area) – TR has built in Paypal support, to enable one of the Paypal features (or all of them), simply tick the boxes in this section.

Switching these features on will make the template engine render the required buttons and activate the use of the Paypal tags mentioned at the start of this chapter.

You can customise the buttons if you wish and set the look and feel of each one in the *System Config > Paypal* section.

In order for the system to work effectively, a product needs to be chosen from the Product Manager (*Product Manger > Add Product*), pick the required product for the particular page in the Product dropdown menu and click update – you have now tied a product to the page and enabled the required Paypal buttons with regard to the item being sold.

## b. The Languages Editor

Tabula Rasa has powerful yet simple to use internationalisation features, adding a language to the site is relatively easy and updates the entire site in one go.

To add a language to the system, simply click on “Languages” and fill out the form:

1. Language Code – This is a two-letter descriptive of the language you would like to add to the system (so for English it could be ‘en’, or for French it could be ‘fr’) – this code needs to be unique so it is suggested to pick carefully.
2. Language Name – This is the descriptive name of the language as it will appear in the “Languages” drop down menu (if the dynamic drop down is used).

Once you click “Add New language To System”, TR will duplicate all pages in the site (without content) and you can access the language specific pages from the content editor to add the language specific content. Since these pages are all new, you will need to reset any template tags you may have changed for the new pages.

## c. Add Page

Adding a page to the system is just as easy as adding a new language, to do so simply click on “Add Page” and fill out the required information.

It is important to remember that the Title of the new page serves as an identification code for the system; however for SEO purposes TR lets you specify your own page ID and so the name you enter here will be converted into a web-compatible name (spaces are removed etc.) – you will be able to set the actual title and content fields in the Content editor once the page is added.

Pages added to the system are added across all languages – so if the site you are creating is multilingual it is very simple to create both pages at once as the system ensures both language versions of the site remain synchronised and contain the same pages, even though those pages can be configured completely independently.

## d. Link Manager

| Related Tags Chart: |                                                                        |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tag                 | Description                                                            |
| <tem:navbar>        | Determines where the system-generated navigation panel will be placed. |

The system generated navigation panel has many customisation features, not only in the *System Configuration* section of TR, but also through the style sheet found in *~/TCMStyles*.

In the Link Manager it is possible to set up the structure of your navigation panel, it is simple to use once certain base principles are understood.

Each menu item has a Parent ID; the Parent ID is the menu item from which the item you are currently editing or creating will be over. Thus:

If you have 3 menu items:

- i. Home (ID: Home)
- ii. About Us (ID: About\_US)
- iii. Contact (ID: Contact)

And you wish to add “Corporate Responsibility” to the About Us section, then while adding the item you simply state About Us as the item’s Parent ID.

In order to do this, merely find out what the ID (Identifying name for TR) of “About Us” is, and enter it into the Parent ID field of the new item you are creating.

When applying the changes, the system will show a preview of how the menu will look beneath.

It is important to remember that each menu item has several options:

- i. Button HTML – Here you can enter the text that will appear in the menu item
- ii. Link – this is the link to which you would like to send the user, if the link is within-system, then you can use the drop-down menu to choose a page in that language group and the link is added automatically.
- iii. Target – Standard html target variable, can be blank, or set to the desired frame that is to be targeted (e.g. \_blank for a new window)
- iv. Parent ID – The “parent” or superior menu item which the current item will appear under.
- v. Visible – Whether or not the item is visible (useful for removing pages for updates etc.)
- vi. Locked – this means the item is only available (and visible) to users that are logged in.

*Each language group has a separate menu which needs to be built from scratch – this is to enable better control over how each language version of a site is best targeted to its group.*

#### e. User Manager

| Related Tags Chart: |                                                          |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Tag                 | Description                                              |
| <tem:login>         | Determines where the login/logout button will be placed. |

The user manager is very easy to use, click on “Add User” to add a user to the system or “Edit User” to change the settings of a particular user.

Users have the “User Active” feature which can lock a particular user out at any time.

#### f. Product Editor

The product editor is also very easy to use, in this area you can add new products to the system and define their currency codes and the price of items held in the database. Please note that all currency codes are in capital letters and should follow the Paypal regulations regarding currencies accepted.

All products entered or edited in this area will appear in the *Content Editor* under *Product Options*.

## g. The Image Gallery

The image gallery can be configured from within *System Config > Image Gallery*, this menu handles most of the aesthetic and organisational features of the image gallery.

The image gallery has various display modes and options to alter it's behaviour and it is suggested to experiment in this section in order to get the gallery to work just as one would like.

The image gallery is managed by the file `~/gallery.aspx` and is very simple to use, it takes two variables:

- i. Gallery – The folder name which holds the images (this should be stored in `~/images/gallery/galleryname`)
- ii. Lang – the language code for the page (not used)

To use the image gallery one must simply link to it:

```
<a href="~/gallery.aspx?gallery=Gallery1">Here is My  
Gallery</a>
```

In this case *Gallery1* is a sub-folder in the `~/images/gallery/` directory.

The gallery will react to the settings set out in the system configuration and display the thumbnails or images accordingly.

Note: The image gallery has a maximum directory size of 30 images, after which a new folder should be used.

## Chapter 4 – Designing with TR

Tabula Rasa is designer-friendly, below is the work flow that TR goes through to generate a page:

1. Client requests page
2. TR Looks up the page ID, and finds out which template to use
3. TR consumes the template and identifies which aspects of TR should be added into the page
4. TR adds the appropriate content where the tag identifiers are
5. Page is displayed to the client

As was explained earlier, different pages can carry their own templates, meaning a site can have several different page layouts depending on their content; however, one copy of these layouts is all that needs to be produced.

Each of the above tags needs to be followed by a closing tag (e.g. `<tem:content>This is Where there is Content</tem:content>`).

Since TR has a built in Navigation pane, managing links becomes a matter of using the back office, however, if it is necessary to hard-link to a particular page, this is easily accomplished:

```
<a href="http://www.yoursite.com/Default.aspx?page=PageID&lang=languagecode">Here is the hard link to my page!</a>
```

The *lang* variable can be omitted as the system will just use the language set as the default language (default: English).

Naturally the entire URL is not required, only the file name and it's variables are needed if linking to a page from within the site.

## Recommendations:

Any piece of software can be used to design for TR, however we find it most useful to design using a mixture of CSS Style sheets to control colour and thematic content, Tables for structure and Macromedia Dreamweaver's template management features to tie it all together.

Using sparing design principles can maximize the usage of the powerful content management features of TR while keeping content, structure and design separate, allowing for rapid updates to be made site wide.

Please remember that all the features of TR that are being used must be switched On or Off before the system will render them.

## Re-Branding the Content Manger

The content manager can easily be re-branded in a similar way that the rest of TR works, in order to change the look and feel of the entire back office, the `admin_template.htm` file needs to be edited or replaced with your own.

TR is a turn-key solution, meaning you as a designer are permitted to alter the branding of the software to re-sell as your own (providing the appropriate license is bought).

## Chapter 5 – Registration

Tabula Rasa is Adware, much work goes into the improvement and maintenance of this system. TR is also free to use for anybody to design with or re-sell under a re-branded image.

However, TR will display advertisements to pay for it's continued development until a site license is purchased. Please visit our website to review the pricing for a site license.